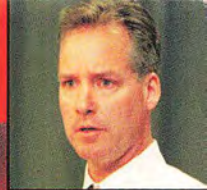


BARRY-BALL ERA BEGINS



Huskers Illustrated

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Volume 20, No. 5

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**Springing
Toward
Fall**



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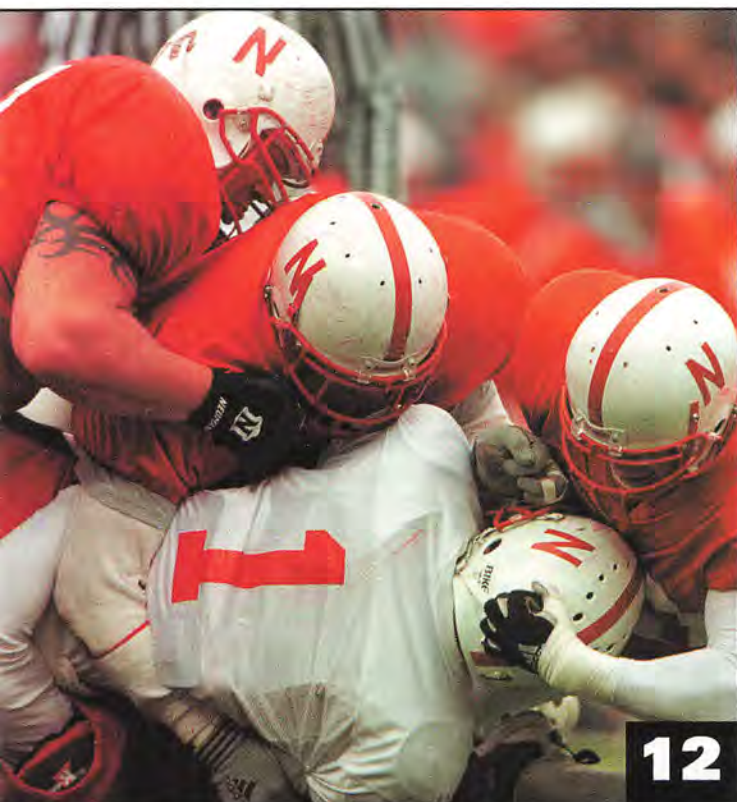
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Red team I-back Correll Buckhalter is gang-tackled by (clockwise from left) Joe Walker, Mark Vedral, Scott Shanle and Clint Finley. *Photo by Scott Bruhn*

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Former Butler University Coach Barry Collier was introduced as Nebraska's 25th head basketball coach on April 5, replacing Danny Nee. *By Mike Babcock*



NEXT ISSUE

The June/July Football Yearbook will be mailed about June 19.

Crouch's Health Key

The key to Nebraska's 2000 season is the health of quarterback Eric Crouch. Despite some bumps and bruises, and a banged-up shoulder that required off-season surgery, he started the final 11 games.

That was a big part of the problem in 1999, when the Huskers had trouble keeping a healthy quarterback, and three different players started during the season.

Jammal Lord might end up being a good quarterback, but he hasn't been tested under fire. Bobby Newcombe could probably move back there in a pinch.

Here's hoping Nebraska's powerful offensive line and other backs can take a lot of the pressure off of Crouch. He needs to stay healthy if the team is to make a serious run at a national championship.

Bob Smith
Phoenix, Ariz.

Solich Is A Bargain

With all the talk about huge contracts for potential basketball coaches, does Nebraska realize what a bargain it has in Coach Frank Solich?

Some would argue that coaching basketball at Nebraska is more difficult since the football program has been good for so long. I maintain it's at least as difficult or more difficult to keep a program on top than it is to get one there.

Husker fans were worried that the program was slipping after the 9-4 season in Solich's first year. Last year's 11-1 mark showed it's still at or near the top, and the 2000 season could be even better.

It's tough for Nebraska fans to be patient, but please give Coach (Barry) Collier a little time. He'll do fine.

Joe Thomas
Chicago, Ill.

Collier received a five-year contract with a base salary of \$200,000. The offer to Tulsa Coach Bill Self was reportedly higher. Supplementary income, from such things as shoe contracts, camps and coaches shows, is not a matter of public record. By comparison, Nebraska football coach Frank Solich's base salary is \$209,250. — Editor

McKeever Captured Plight

As a subscriber to your fine magazine, I really enjoyed Curt McKeever's column

(April Huskers Illustrated). It vividly pictured Coach Nee's plight.

He was a man who was candid, but did that interview at Rutgers hurt? Failure to recruit Mike Miller (University of Florida) of Mitchell, S.D., T.J. Pugh of Omaha and Kirk Hinrich of Sioux City must have really hurt, ditto the failure to get quality jucos.

Just as in football, the pressure to both win and to fill arenas has been so great. Do you remember Joe B. Hall at Kentucky? He took over for Adolph Rupp in 1972, but the SEC had changed so much. His team won the NCAA in 1978, but he left coaching in 1985. The pressure was probably great.

In John Feinstein's "Season," which mentions an NU win over KU at Devaney, I almost cried when reading about Don DeVoe at Tennessee. He had to get the Vols into the NCAA and fill the 24,000 Thompson-Boling Arena. They did beat UK there on Feb. 17, 1988, but didn't make the NCAA and couldn't even host an NIT game.

The next season, attendance was down 44,000. Not even making the NCAA could help him keep his job. He had to resign. He is now at Navy, where he is getting his players ready to maybe fight wars. The 3,000-seat arena has made it free of pressure. He must be a lot happier.

George R. Rosner
Schenectady, N.Y.

Other Sports Appreciated

I realize many of your readers would probably prefer all football, but I want you to know that I appreciate the stories on other sports as well.

I enjoy Nebraska football as much as anyone, but we also try to attend and follow other sports. Nebraska has some great athletic teams. Football is just one of them.

Mary Jones
Omaha, Neb.



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EDITOR,
GENERAL MANAGER
Brian Hill

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Mike Babcock

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Mark Derowitsch, James Hale,
Todd Henrichs, Curt McKeever,
Bob Schaller, Steve Sipple

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Scott Bruhn, Nebraska Sports
Information Office

SPORTS MARKETING
& ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Jeff Tudor
(402) 423-3405

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HI Online

<http://www.huskersillustrated.com>

E-Mail Addresses

Editor: Hleditor@aol.com
Advertising/marketing: jtuder@navix.net

Got Something To Say?

Please send your comments and questions to: Letters, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, Neb. 68521. You can also fax them to us at (402) 474-5132. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, Hleditor@aol.com.



'School is Cool' Jam

Photos by
Scott Bruhn

Several Nebraska athletes gave motivational speeches and presentations to youth from around the state during the ninth annual "School is Cool" Jam April 10 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Among those participating were (clockwise from left) 4.0 graduate and linebacker Brian Shaw, quarterback Eric Crouch, soccer All-American Sharolta Nonen and women's basketball standout Nicole Kubik.



PARLEZ-VOUS FRANCAIS?

The most difficult adjustment he has had to make since coming to Nebraska is "the English," said Patrick Kabongo, a redshirted freshman defensive tackle on the football team.

English is a second language for Kabongo, who is from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. His first language is French. "I'm able to speak English, but sometimes, the accent, I couldn't understand," he said.

He had a particular problem understanding I-back Correll Buckhalter because "Correll was talking so fast," Kabongo said. "I couldn't understand a word." Buckhalter is from Collins, Miss.



Patrick Kabongo

Former Cornhusker defensive coordinator and defensive line coach Charlie McBride also was difficult to understand at first because he spoke so fast, according to Kabongo.

But "you got the sense of what he was saying," said Kabongo.

He has taken some good-natured ribbing about his accent from his teammates.

"The thing is, they think I've got an accent because I'm from Canada. But if I go home (to Canada) with them, people are going to think they've got an accent," he said. "I guess in Canada, we always say 'eh, eh man.' People in America, they laugh about that. But I'm going to stay the same.

"That's where I'm from."

When Kabongo gets the urge to converse in French, he needs to look no further than Husker soccer players Amy Walsh and Isabelle Morneau, both of whom also are from Quebec.

"Sometimes it's good to find somebody," he said.

Sophomore I-back Dahrran Diedrick also is from Canada, Scarborough, Ontario. He doesn't speak French, Kabongo said. However, "I can speak easy with him." ■

WORK IN WEIGHT ROOM PAYS OFF

For the second year in a row, rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch was the football team's Lifter of the Year. To put that in perspective, only two other players have earned the award back-to-back since it was first presented in 1974. The others were Rik Bonness (1974-75) and Donta Jones (1993-94).

Jones shared the award with Cory Schlesinger in 1993.

"It's by far the biggest honor I've ever gotten," said Vanden Bosch, a senior from Larchwood, Iowa. "To have your own teammates show they respect you enough to vote you as the guy that works the hardest in the weight room just really means a lot to me, more than any award I've ever gotten."



Kyle Vanden Bosch

The other finalists were senior Jason Schwab (offensive tackle) junior Dominic Raiola (center) and freshmen Jon Dawson (offensive guard) and Ryon Bingham (defensive tackle).

Vanden Bosch had the best performance index on the team during post-winter conditioning testing with 2,885 points, setting a personal best in the pro agility run, 3.97 seconds. That converted to 977 points, the second most scored on any performance test in Husker history.

Vanden Bosch's pro agility time has improved from 4.34 seconds and he has increased his vertical jump, an indication of explosiveness, from 29 inches to 34.5 inches.

I-back Dan Alexander, Lifter of the Year as a freshman, earned the team's 2000 Performance Index Award. The award is given to the athlete who scores the most performance index points at one testing period during the year. Alexander scored 3,063 points in pre-winter conditioning tests. ■

IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?

Art Kraus, a meteorologist from Princeton, N.J., won \$32,000 for knowing that former Cornhusker football coach Tom Osborne is a candidate for the United States House of Representatives.

Osborne was the answer to the \$32,000 question on a recent episode of the television game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* The question was: What former NCAA football coach is running for Congress in the year 2000? The other choices were Jimmy Johnson, Joe Paterno and Bobby Bowden. ■

SOUPED UP STAFF

New men's basketball coach Barry Collier began assembling a staff by hiring Dave "Soupy" Campbell, head coach at Nebraska Western Community College in Scottsbluff the past 13 years.

Collier described Campbell, whose Nebraska Western teams won at least 21 games in each of his seasons, as "an excellent recruiter" as well as "an excellent basketball coach, both on the floor and in the locker room."

Collier also added Reggie Rankin, who spent the last three seasons on the staff at Georgia.

Larry Gay, Cleo Hill and Randy Roth, former coach Danny Nee's assistants, all were let go.

GOOD SITUATION?

New men's basketball coach Barry Collier is stepping into a good situation, according to Oklahoma State Coach Eddie Sutton.

"It can be one of the elite programs in the country. All the tools are there," Sutton told the Omaha World-Herald. Sutton once coached at Creighton.

NEE HIRED

Former Nebraska men's basketball coach Danny Nee



Danny Nee

was hired as head coach by Robert Morris College in suburban Pittsburgh in mid-April. Nee's wife Janet is from Pittsburgh.

"I have no doubt Danny Nee can do tremendous things here," Robert Morris Athletic Director Susan Hofacre told the Omaha World-Herald. The school is in Division I of the NCAA.

"When I saw his name on the list of applicants, my eyes popped out," Hofacre said.

Nee holds the Cornhusker career record for coaching victories. He was one of two finalists for the head coach's job at the Air Force Academy before taking the Robert Morris job.

Robert Morris has advanced to the NCAA Tournament five times since 1983. ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

GYMNAST BRINK WINS TWO NCAA TITLES



Heather Brink

Husker senior Heather Brink won titles in the all-around and vault competition at the NCAA Women's Gymnastics Championships at Boise, Idaho, in mid-April.

"I can't think of a better way to go out my senior year," Brink told the Lincoln Journal Star.

Brink's all-around title was the first-ever for a Nebraska women's gymnast, and her vaulting title was the second. Michele Bryant was the first, winning the vault in 1990.

Coach Dan Kendig's Huskers finished fourth in the NCAA team competition, behind UCLA, Utah and Georgia, with Brink scoring the highest for Nebraska in every event.

K AS IN KOMINE

Shane Komine, a sophomore pitcher on the Cornhusker baseball team, tied a school record by striking out 17 in the first game of a double-header sweep of Kansas in early April.

He might have broken the record had he pitched the ninth inning of the 9-3 victory at Buck Beltzer Field, but his pitch count had reached 136 through eight innings.

Brent Frieauf set the record in 1983, against St. Cloud State.

HOTSHOTS

Nebraska's rifle team finished third at the NCAA championships at Lexington, Va., in mid-March. The Huskers were second in the air rifle competition and fourth in the smallbore competition.

Terim Richards, a sophomore from Louisville, Neb., was Nebraska's air rifle leader, scoring 390 out of 400, while Nicole Allaire, a freshman from Kearny, N.J., led the Huskers in the smallbore competition, scoring 1,164 out of 1,200. The team was in just its second season of competition. Nebraska's Karen Anthony was the Collegiate Rifle Coaches Association women's coach of the year.

BUSY WALK-ON

Amanda Buchholz, a freshman walk-on from Ogallala, Neb., finished the season with Coach Paul Sanderford's Husker basketball team and immediately joined Coach Rhonda Revelle's softball team, for which she had been playing when her basketball schedule allowed.

Buchholz has provided the softball team with some much-needed help in the infield. Husker infielders have been beset by injuries. Third baseman Cindy Roethemeyer was sidelined for the season and shortstop Leigh Suhr and second baseman Jennifer Lizama also have missed games due to injuries.

GOOD START

Carl Crawford, a quarterback from Houston, Texas, was a member of Nebraska's 1999 football recruiting class. But he was the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' first pick in the second round of the major league baseball draft in June and signed a contract worth a reported \$1.245 million.

A provision in his contract required him to forgo playing college football.

Baseball America recently rated Crawford, a left-handed hitting outfielder, the Devil Rays' fourth-best prospect, noting that his speed "enables him to outrun his mistakes."

Crawford had a successful first professional season, hitting .319 with 62 runs scored, 14 doubles and 17 stolen bases for the Devil Rays' Rookie League team in Princeton, N.J.

BRIEFLY NOTED

— Adam Pine, a senior from Ballina, Australia, became Nebraska's first men's NCAA swimming champion when he won the 100-meter butterfly at the NCAA championships at Minneapolis, Minn., in late March. Pine broke the U.S. Open record to win the event, in 51.23 seconds.

Pine, a 17-time All-American, was a two-time NCAA runner-up in the event.

— Nebraska's Derek Leiter finished fifth in the all-around competition at the NCAA men's gymnastics championships in Iowa City, Iowa. The Cornhusker senior scored 57.825.

Ohio State's Jamie Natalie scored 58.375 to win the all-around. ■

Sharing The Spotlight

*Spring football wasn't the only sport
on the minds of Husker fans this time around*



**Brian
HILL**

IT'S BEEN A STRANGE SPRING.

Nebraska was down to zero healthy scholarship quarterbacks by the time the Spring Game rolled around. Even before that, spring football — the only other season to many Husker fans — didn't seem to be getting the attention it usually does.

It had something to do with basketball.

My colleagues at sister publications in Kentucky, Indiana, Iowa, North Carolina and Florida like to make light of the Nebraska basketball program and the (lack of) attention it receives.

That hasn't been true this spring.

The dismissal of Danny Nee and subsequent search for a new coach — and the salary figures being thrown around — had the Husker faithful talking basketball. "Can Nebraska really get Bill Self?" "What do you think of this Barry Collier guy?" "Where is Butler?"

If first impressions mean anything, Collier made a very favorable one, when he was introduced as Nebraska's 25th head coach on April 5.

Like many others, I happened to be watching the first-round NCAA Tournament game in which Butler took eventual national runner-up Florida to overtime, before losing, 69-68, on a buzzer-beater. I admired Butler's effort but didn't think much about the coach who almost pulled off the upset. He's now at Nebraska.

You can learn more about the new coach in a story written by contributing editor Mike Babcock on Page 24 of this issue.

No, we certainly haven't forgotten about football. A crowd announced at 22,415 braved 40-degree temperatures (it was 80 degrees the previous day) to attend the Spring Game, which was televised in Nebraska.

You'll find a full report on spring football and the Red-White game, which was missing several key players this time around, beginning on Page 12.

Those attending the Spring Game might have caught a glimpse of construction a few blocks west of Memorial Stadium. Ground was broken just three days earlier at the site of Nebraska's new baseball and softball stadiums. It'll be fun to watch the progress.

And for a lot more football, stay tuned for our next issue — the Football Yearbook, published in mid-June. ■

It won't be long now!

Watch for the huge Huskers Illustrated June/July "Football Yearbook" issue (available June 20)



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Walk-on Program Still Crucial

Solich says cutting back, limiting numbers would do nothing but hurt football



Mike BABCOCK

WHAT'S GOOD for General Motors is good for the country.

I don't remember who said that, nor do I remember the context. But I think it meant that the economic well-being of the country was related to the economic well-being of General Motors.

I also think the comment's connotation was negative. You can probably understand why.

If so, disregard that because the parallel I am drawing isn't meant to be negative. It's a matter of fact. What's good for the football team is good for the Nebraska athletic department.

And the truth is, the athletic department's economic dependency on the football program is much more dramatic than the U.S. economy's dependency on General Motors then, or now.

The athletic department is self-sufficient because of football. Without it, Cornhusker athletics would be operating in the red — and that wouldn't be a reference to the predominant school color.

So when Coach Frank Solich says walk-ons are crucial to the continued success of the football program, he's also talking about the economic health of the athletic department.

Solich discussed Nebraska's walk-on program following a practice in the second week of spring drills. The reason for the discussion was Clemson's announcement that it was significantly cutting back on football walk-ons in order to comply with proportionality concerns related to Title IX.

In simple terms, if that is possible when dealing with gender equity issues raised by Title IX, proportionality means the percentages of male and female scholarship athletes should approximate the percentages of males and females in the university's general student population.

That probably wouldn't be a serious problem for most major college athletic departments if it weren't for football programs, which are allowed 85 scholarships under current NCAA rules.

Radical reformists have argued that the number be reduced to 60 or fewer. Such reformists aren't concerned about fiscal responsibility. Their agenda is based on passion not reason.

In any case, no women's sports require anywhere near as many as 85 scholarships. So in order to achieve proportionality, athletic directors have either had to reduce the number of scholarships in other men's sports or they have had to increase the number of scholarships in women's sports.

Some athletic departments have eliminated non-revenue men's sports.

Nebraska athletic director Bill Byrne has taken the latter approach, establishing varsity programs for women in soccer, rifle and bowling — successful programs, it should be noted.

The Clemson situation, however, reflects another way of determining proportionality, based on overall participation rather than scholarship numbers. Those who take that position want to count every athlete on a team, claiming that even though walk-ons don't cost the athletic department scholarship money, there are other expenses associated with allowing them to participate.

Because of that mentality, Nebraska has been forced to limit its number of football walk-ons. It might not seem so, but 10 or 12 years ago, the Cornhuskers had many more walk-ons.

"We are trying to make sure we don't have things getting out of control in terms of the number of walk-on players," Solich said. "That's why we started restricting them. There was a time where, really, we didn't screen walk-ons. We took guys that wanted to come out and gave them a chance."

Now, walk-ons are evaluated to the same degree that scholarship recruits are.

"They definitely are," said Solich. "We do not accept a walk-on without evaluating him on film, without finding out where he's at grade-wise, without finding out about his character."

"So the time commitment to having a walk-on program is extensive."

Nebraska's reputation for being a walk-on haven dates, arbitrarily perhaps, to the Bob Devaney era, when Langston Coleman hitchhiked from Washington, D.C., to play for the Cornhuskers.

Since then, walk-ons have played an important role in Nebraska's success. And as the scholarship limits have been reduced, the walk-ons have become even more important.

"If you want to have any kind of depth, you'd better have a decent walk-on program," Solich said. "Otherwise, a few injuries here and there can really take you out of things."

That was apparent in 1998, his first season as head coach. "With all the injuries we had, if we did not have a good walk-on program, it would have been tough," he said.

"Football's a game (in which) I don't care what you think you have in terms of depth, it's a game of people running into one another, and . . . injuries are a part of it."

"Consequently, trying to get by on cutting back on numbers and limiting numbers, cutting away scholarships, that type of approach will do nothing but hurt the game of football."

And at Nebraska, what hurts football, hurts the athletic department, too. ■



Coach Frank Solich says NU limits its number of walk-ons.

The Reward Is The Ultimate

Former Husker All-American Weston 'lives' volleyball in bid to make Olympic team



Bob SCHALLER

ALLISON WESTON WAS TIRED. So tired that it looked like she was laboring to get her warm-ups off at the Olympic Training Center in early April. She had just endured another long practice with the U.S. National Team, of which she is the captain.

So what did she do to follow up that practice?

She hoped on a stair-stepping machine for 30 minutes.

"Got to get it done," Weston said with a forced smile. "There's work to do, you know."

There has been work, and Weston has gotten it done with her teammates. The U.S. Women are now qualified for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, something they accomplished in January of this year by beating the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Canada.

"Qualifying for the Olympics is, obviously, the most exciting thing that has happened to us as a group," Weston said after finishing her second workout of the morning/early afternoon.

Weston, the former University of Nebraska All-American, who helped lead Nebraska to its first national title in volleyball, has been a key cog during the U.S. team's transformation from also-ran to Olympic qualifier, and, hopefully, contender.

But when Coach Mick Haley first asked her to join the program three years ago, Weston wasn't sure she wanted to, in effect, commit her life to volleyball after giving so many years to the sport at high school in Papillion and then at NU.

"She said she'd get back to me," Haley said. "Then, she bought a dog, named it Sydney and was on her way."

Her way took her to Colorado Springs and the Olympic Training Center, where athletes literally live their sport.

"It's 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Weston said. "In college, you go to class and then practice. Even though it's time-consuming in college, it's really no more than a full-time job. Here, it is your life. I get up and go to practice. I rest, go to practice or workout, then rest. And then, it's the next morning, and it's time for practice."

The reward is the ultimate for any competitive athlete.

"For me, the driving force was the chance to go to the Olympics," Weston said, before adding with a smile, "had we not qualified back in January, you'd have found me on a bridge with a rock tied to my ankle, ready to leap."

She wouldn't do that — she wouldn't have the time, for starters. And while the team has qualified, there's no guarantee of a spot for her, although Haley admits it's "very, very, very likely" Weston will be on the team she captains. She'd fit in anywhere — Weston had played each position on the front row at least once.

"Allison came in as a middle blocker, moved to the right side, and then to the left, and then to the right, and the left

again," Haley said. "She's held tough despite the peaks and valleys. Since she took over the captaincy, there's been no void of leadership because of how she conducts herself and how she plays. She's got a lot of self-confidence and she's a hard worker. She's been a real asset."

But that by no means indicates that Weston can coast.

"It's such a long process, and it's a matter of being consistent and sustaining your performance and improvement," Weston said. "That gets hard because there is no let up. In college, you knew the end was near when there was a month left in the season. Here, it's year-round, every year."

Which is why Weston is always working out when she's not at practice. Her legs are as strong and lean as they've ever been, and her upper body strength is likewise at an all-time high as she works harder to avoid injuries and increase her chances of keeping her place on the team secure.

"Once you're injured at this level," Weston says, "there's someone there to take your spot."

One of those players is familiar to Nebraska fans. Nancy Meendering, an NU junior in 1999, has stepped right in and not missed a beat. Meendering also has a shot at making the Olympic team, both in 2000 and 2004.

"She's adapted so quickly and so well to this regimen," Weston said, "a lot faster than I did."

Haley agrees, but admits Meendering still has to adapt.

"Nancy is exceptional in a couple of ways," Haley said. "She makes her own plays with athleticism and velocity. But as far as being a comfortable athlete on the floor, she's still a little stiff at times."

Weston can relate, remembering what she went through when she first joined the program.

But the rewards, she says, are well worth it.

"Sometimes, when I slow down and put it in perspective, it is amazing," Weston said. "Sometimes, I don't feel like I'm one of the best players in the country because I'm surrounded by incredible athletes. I'm constantly surrounded by greatness. But looking at the big picture, it is amazing how far I've come. I honestly didn't believe or dream that in a million years I'd be at this point."

She still misses being a college student, and being a part of Nebraska volleyball.

"That time in Nebraska was such a wonderful part of my life," Weston said, putting on her USA warmups after finishing a workout. "I miss it a lot. Out here, it's not the same."

"Don't get me wrong, I am grateful, and it's been incredible to be a part of this, and be able to travel all around the world. But there's nothing like being at home, at the Coliseum, with the crowd hanging on every move you make on the court." ■



Allison Weston was a three-time All-American at NU.

Bob Schaller covers the Huskers for the Scottsbluff Star-Herald. His newly released books, *The Olympic Dream and Spirit* (Volumes I, II and III) include former Huskers Allison Weston (volleyball) and Travis Niemeier (diving). He can be reached at schallerrc@aol.com.

Well-Armed For The Stretch

Despite close losses, Van Horn confident Huskers can make a strong run



Curt McKEEVER

AFTER A THREE-GAME SWEEP of Kansas the second weekend in April, the Nebraska baseball team was leading the Big 12 Conference in team batting average and was No. 2 in team earned-run average.

So, how come the Cornhuskers were just 10-8 in the league and tied for fifth place?

Some unlucky bounces of the ball factored in, but the main thing was their inability to win close games.

At that point, NU was just 1-4 in one-run decisions and 0-3 in games decided by two runs.

Third-year Coach Dave Van Horn was frustrated over all the close calls, but no less confident about his team's ability to make a strong run down the stretch.

"I told the guys, if we keep playing, I really feel we would be a good tournament team, and I'm not just talking about a conference tournament," said Van Horn, whose 1999 squad won nine straight games and the Big 12 Tournament to clinch Nebraska's first NCAA Regional berth in 12 years. "We have some skill players, and we have some pitching depth. If some people get hot at the right time, we can play for awhile."

A year ago, Nebraska was 10-5 in league play after 18 games. This season, the Huskers were 7-8 after losing three games to Baylor by a combined four runs.

Afterward, a writer at the Dallas Morning News took a pop at Van Horn's team for staking claim to the school's first conference title in a half-century. NU did so after winning the 1999 Big 12 Tournament.

"To the Big 12 sopranos who call Texas home, tournament trophies make for nice doorstops," wrote Al Carter. "In a pinch, you can use them to pack mound dirt. But what counts most are those straight-up, regular-season conference titles, something no Big 12 school outside Texas has so far managed to win."

Nebraska likely has too much ground to make up to break up that monopoly, but the Huskers might get closer than some think.

"The difference between a great season and a good season is winning one- and two-run games," Van Horn lamented. "We have a good team. We can compete with anybody in the league day in and day out, and I think we've proven that by the scores of our games."

"We're very competitive, and we're just a big hit away or one pitch away or a play away from maybe winning three or four more games. That can really turn a record around."

Nebraska shook off its Texas twister to win its next five, including a second victory against nationally ranked

Creighton. That left Van Horn's team 23-11 overall and having 15 of its final 22 regular-season games at home.

That's why the Huskers should have entered the month of May with more optimism than doubt.

"The frustrations of the game — you just have to try to play through and turn it your way," Van Horn said. "And when you get on a roll, you've got to just keep playing hard."

"I think our guys have done a good job. We still have a fairly young team, and in baseball upperclassmen usually bring a lot to the table. Young guys always have the talent, but sometimes they don't know how to win yet. I think we've gone through that a little bit."

Nebraska has had surprising luck replacing consensus first-team All-America first baseman Ken Harvey and designated hitter Jeff Hedman. Junior Dan Johnson has picked up most of the slack at first, as he was hovering around .333 in mid-April. Matt Hopper, a redshirt freshman, had settled into the DH role and was around .365.

Outfielders Jamal Strong and Adam Shabala, keys to Harvey's huge 1999 season because of their effectiveness as No. 1 and 2 hitters, weren't coming close to duplicating their numbers of a year ago. But sophomore Adam Stern emerged as a top hitter, and when junior college transfer Josh Hesse got hot after returning from offseason hand surgery, that allowed Van Horn to move last year's postseason hero, John Cole, from second base to the outfield.

Oh, and let's not forget that pitching staff. Considering the numbers that group has put up, the Huskers don't automatically think they'll have to produce a lot of runs to win. A couple might be sufficient.

Last year's ace until he was sidelined with a back injury, Shane Komine, was a lot more dominating than his 5-3 record might indicate. He led the team with a 1.98 ERA and 87 strikeouts, fanning a school record 17 against Kansas.

But the best indication of how strong the NU hurlers had been was the fact that last year's wins leader, Scott Fries, ranked no better than 10th on the team in ERA, even though his was a respectable 4.09.

"Our pitching is unreal," Stern said after the April 11 win against Creighton. "And our offense is coming around."

Teams that run into Nebraska this month will no doubt take that as a warning sign that the Huskers figure on having plenty of steam for another strong late-season run. ■



Freshman lefty Jamie Rodrigue threw back-to-back shutouts vs. Kansas State and Oklahoma.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.



Red 21, White 21

Stand-Ins Take Center Stage

With inexperienced walk-on quarterbacks leading both teams, the annual Spring Game was bound to be a little vanilla

Stories by Mike Babcock
Photos by Scott Bruhn

Nebraska's spring intrasquad game was as unique as it was mundane.

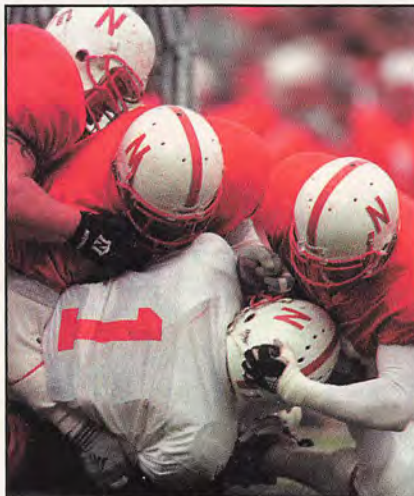
It ended in a tie, something that hadn't happened since the first spring game on record in 1950, when an alumni team played Coach Bill Glassford's varsity to a 13-13 stand-off.

"I guess, you know, no one loses in this game," Joe Chrisman said.

The final score was 21-21 on a cool, overcast, mid-April afternoon, before a modest crowd — by recent standards at Nebraska — of 22,415 at Memorial Stadium.

Those who showed up for a preview of Coach Frank Solich's third team needed a roster sheet to keep track of the players, and not just because some saw action on both teams.

For instance, Chrisman, a walk-on from Longmont, Colo., was the No. 1 quarterback for the game,



Redshirt freshman Chris Butler (opposite page and above) was the game's leading rusher, with 16 carries for 118 yards and two touchdowns. One of his scores came on a 40-yard run.

sharing time with Kelly Cook, also a walk-on, in directing the Red team.

Cook, who is from Burke High School in Omaha, began the spring

as a wingback but was moved to quarterback after Jammal Lord suffered a knee injury in the third week.

Cook scored the game's first touchdown on a 1-yard sneak.

Without Lord, and with Eric Crouch being held out of contact while recovering from surgery on his right shoulder, Chrisman and Brett Lindstrom would have been the only quarterbacks.

Lindstrom, yet another walk-on from Omaha's Millard West High, was moved from wingback before the start of spring. He played the entire game at quarterback for the White team and hooked up with Ryan Ommert on the 46-yard touchdown pass with 2:24 remaining that led to the tie.

Anyway, the situation was such that Chrisman felt compelled to identify himself after stepping to the podium in the South Stadium varsity lounge for a post-game interview.

"Joe Chrisman, quarterback," he said.

Chrisman's face wasn't the only unfamiliar one in the lounge afterward. Later, I-back Chris Butler stepped to the podium to discuss his performance as the game's leading rusher.

He ran for 118 yards and two touchdowns.

Butler, still a freshman in eligibility, is a walk-on from Hoover, Ala., but was put on scholarship for the spring semester. He also played well in the spring game a year ago.

He's in a difficult situation given the depth at I-back, however. In addition to Dan Alexander, Correll



Redshirt freshman I-back Robin Miller finds the going tough against the Red defense, which included Rod Baker (left), Pat Ricketts (on ground) and Randy Stella. Miller rushed 16 times for 24 yards.

Buckhalter and Dahrran Diedrick, he was competing with scholarship freshmen DeAntae Grixby and Robin Miller in the spring. And they'll be joined by Josh Davis and Thunder Collins in the fall.

Davis was hampered by a knee injury, while Collins has yet to enroll. But he was a frequent spectator at practices and spent the spring game signing autographs behind the Red team bench.

Alexander was held out of the spring game because of a sore ankle. The point is, "we've got a group of guys (I-backs) that are really talented," said Butler. "So what you try to do is just go out there and push to your fullest, do the best you can do."

Fullback Judd Davies also scored two touchdowns, on his only two

carries.

Davies, a redshirted freshman, had a good spring. "I think I have a lot more confidence now than when I started this spring," he said. "I've got a long way to go. But I'm getting better."

Davies will join returning starter Willie Miller and Tyrone Uhler in the mix. "Judd probably doesn't have as far to go as maybe he thinks he does," said Solich, who immediately followed Davies at the podium. "He's really a fine player . . . he'll be contributing next season."

KaLena Barnes probably won't be contributing in the fall, but she drew considerable attention during the fourth quarter of the spring game, for a punt that traveled, with bounce, 35 yards.

Barnes, a sprinter on the track

team whose nickname is "Beanie," became the first female on the football team. She started onto the field in the third quarter, anticipating a punt on a fourth-and-1 at the Red team's own 41-yard line, but was called back by assistant coach Ron Brown.

"He was like: 'We're going for it,'" the 5-foot-4, 140-pound Barnes said. "I was hoping to get at least two or three (punts). But I'll take one. I was happy I got out there. It was a lot of fun."

"I have a new-found respect for the guys, for the team, for the program."

Despite her size, Barnes didn't wear a green pullover during the spring game, as a warning about overly aggressive contact. The quarterbacks did, however.

"It's tough," said Chrisman. "I understand why we do it. We just can't afford to lose another quarterback. But it kind of presents an unrealistic view out there, for both the defense and the offense. And it limits us to what we can run. Today was really a very basic package of plays."

That was fine as far as the coaches were concerned.

"The main goal that we wanted to accomplish today was, it was another great opportunity for us to evaluate," new defensive coordinator Craig Bohl said. "We've got a lot of jobs open on the No. 1 defense, and there's nothing you can do that can replicate live, game-type situations."

"So our main goal today was evaluation. I don't think we tried to do a lot of things either offensively or defensively that necessarily tricked people. We just wanted to see 11 guys out there doing their jobs, (see) which guys could perform."

"And I think we got an excellent view as far as performance."

What might be mundane for fans usually isn't for coaches. ■

Green Didn't Always Stop Aggressive Husker Defense

Kyle Vanden Bosch didn't seem to be concerned about the green pullover jerseys worn by the quarterbacks in Nebraska's annual Red-White intrasquad spring game.

It was pretty much business as usual for the senior rush end, who was credited with three quarterback sacks for losses totaling 28 yards. "I didn't even pay any attention to it," he said.

Neither, it appeared, did middle linebacker Tony Tata, who got in a good lick just as White team quarterback Brett Lindstrom pitched the ball midway through the third quarter.

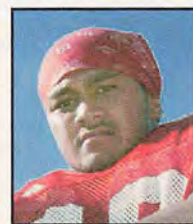
Tata couldn't have done anything different on the play. It happened so quickly.

Lindstrom got right back up and continued to direct the White team.

That just about everyone got back up following collisions and was able to finish was among the positives in this year's game. The only injuries of note, in fact, were weakside linebacker Randy Stella's shoulder stinger and wingback Bobby Newcombe's dislocated elbow.



Kyle Vanden Bosch



Tony Tata

cated elbow.

Stella is fine, and Newcombe should be in time to begin working out for next fall. "He (Newcombe) should have no problem being ready to go in terms of eventually getting a good summer conditioning program in and also getting ready for fall camp," said Coach Frank Solich.

"To my knowledge, he will not need surgery. It doesn't appear that there will be anybody that will come out of this spring game requiring actual surgery."

Whether or not quarterback Jammal Lord, who suffered a PCL injury during the third week of the spring, will

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More News From Spring Football

NEBRASKANS APPROVE

Frank Solich has an 86-percent approval rate among Nebraskans based on a poll conducted by the Omaha World-Herald. The state's largest newspaper released the results of the poll on April 2.

The telephone survey of 1,402 Nebraskans showed only 2 percent disapproved of Solich, with 13 percent neither approving nor disapproving. The statistical margin of error was 2.6 percent.

Solich received an 82-percent approval rate in a World-Herald poll conducted in 1998, his first season as head coach. That survey was taken after the Cornhuskers' first loss of the season.

COVERAGE COVERED

The Cornhuskers emphasized kickoff coverage during the spring after allowing an average of 21.4 yards per return on 45 returns in 1999. That average was the highest since 1970 (24.6), and it was the third highest since 1946, when such statistics were first compiled on an annual basis.

NO COMPLAINING

I-backs Dan Alexander and Correll Buckhalter were among the veteran players who saw limited action during the spring in order for young players at their positions to get a good look.

There were no complaints, however, because "we don't give them a chance to whine," said Solich. "We just tell them how it's going to be because whining can come into play."

Even though he would have preferred to get more snaps, Alexander understood the situation and accepted it. "I think more carries would definitely help me a lot more to go out there and get sharper, work on things I want to work on," he said. "But at the same time, I realize, hey, it's really unfair to a lot of our younger guys if we were taking all the snaps. They need to be evaluated."

Buckhalter agreed. "It gets boring during the scrimmages, not getting that many carries. But we have a lot of guys behind me and Dan that the coaches need to see where they're at," he said.

RIMINGTON RESEMBLANCE

Jon Dawson, a redshirted freshman offensive lineman from Cheyenne, Wyo., bears a physical resemblance to former Cornhusker Dave Rimington, a two-time Outland Trophy winner and unanimous All-American. "He reminds me of Dave," said offensive line coach Milt Tenopir.

"He looks like Dave structurally, his features and hair."

Dawson also is "a pretty good athlete," Tenopir said. "He'll play."

Dawson, a finalist for the lifter of the year award, played center on the scout team in the fall. But he played right guard during the spring. "It's a new pace, just a big-time pace," he said of the transition from high school to major college football. "You have to think about a lot more stuff, too."

Dawson has increased his weight from 272 pounds to 295 since he arrived.

His weight was a concern in recruiting, according to Tenopir. "Jon was a guy we debated on because of the size factor," he said. "We didn't know whether he was going to be able to be a 290-pounder. He was the smallest kid (offensive lineman) we recruited that year. We got a bunch of big kids."

MIKE BROWN'S REPLACEMENT

Senior Joe Walker is the likely successor to Mike Brown at rover. Not having Mike Brown or Ralph Brown, who started every game at cornerback during his career, has motivated the other players in the secondary, according to Walker, who has been the Cornhuskers' regular nickel back.

"It's kind of like an F student," he said. "Once the teacher gets on his back, it kind of turns around. I think it's a positive sign for our secondary to have a challenge like that, to step up to."

HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS

Sophomore kicker Josh Brown also practiced at wingback during the spring, and got help from those with whom he was competing at the position, including Ben Cornelson, John Klem and Troy Hassebroek. "Those three guys have really been helping me out a lot," said Brown.

"They've been super, real patient, taking me up to the line and showing me what I need to do. It is very weird, especially when they're yelling out: 'You need to do this, you need to do that,' from the sidelines. It's almost embarrassing because everybody's looking at you." ■



Jon Dawson

require surgery won't be determined until June, according to Solich.

"We'll see what kind of healing process is taking place," he said.

If Lord were to undergo surgery on the knee, he would likely be sidelined all of next season, creating a significant depth problem at quarterback. And if that were to occur, Newcombe would become the No. 1 back-up to Eric Crouch, while continuing to play wingback, according to Solich.

Crouch was held out of contact in the spring while recovering from shoulder surgery.

Several other top-unit players missed part or all of the spring because of injuries, including defensive tackles Loran Kaiser and Jeremy Slechta and rush ends Chris Kelsay, Justin Smith and Brandon Mooberry. "We'll be glad to get our full contingency of athletes back," Solich said.

"If we can get them all back, it will be a good group." ■

Three Huskers Go in NFL Draft

As their former teammates completed spring practice, several players who completed their eligibility last fall spent some anxious moments waiting for a call in the NFL Draft.

When it was over, just three Nebraska players had been selected, the fewest since 1969, when two were selected.

Safety Mike Brown was the first ex-Husker drafted, taken by the Chicago Bears in the second round. He was the 39th pick overall.

One thing that impressed the Bears was Brown's intelligence.

"The thing that's rare about this kid is he is so smart," Bears defensive coordinator Greg Blache told the Chicago Sun-Times. "The kid's a sharp cookie. If there's any kid in this draft who can come in and compete, it's this guy."

Defensive tackle Steve Warren was also selected on the first day of the draft, going to the Green Bay Packers in the third round.

The only other Nebraska player selected was cornerback Ralph Brown, who went to the New York Giants in the fifth round.

At least three other Huskers reportedly signed free agent contracts.

Linebackers Julius Jackson and Eric Johnson signed with the Oakland Raiders, and teammate Tony Ortiz, also a linebacker, signed with the Dallas Cowboys. ■

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Red I-back Dahrran Diedrick tries to break away from White linebacker Jamie Burrow.

BY THE NUMBERS

Spring Game: Red vs. White April 15, 2000

Score By Quarters

White	0	0	7	14	—	21
Red	0	7	14	0	—	21

Team Stats

	W	R
First Downs	16	12
Rushing	14	8
Passing	2	4
Penalty	0	0
Rushing Attempts	58	43
Yards Gained Rushing	239	181
Yards Lost Rushing	42	42
Net Yards Rushing	197	139
Net Yards Passing	87	76
Passes Attempted	10	17
Passes Completed	5	6
Had Intercepted	0	1
Total Plays	68	60
Total Net Yards	284	215
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.2	3.6
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	1-1
Penalties-Yards	6-38	2-11
Punts-Yards	6-253	6-259
Avg. Per Punt	42.2	43.2
Punt Returns-Yards	5-35	4-64
Interceptions-Yards	1-10	0-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	4-112	3-44
Possession Time	33:57	26:03

Scoring

Red — Kelly Cook 1 yard run (Josh Brown kick)

Red — Judd Davies 1-yard run (Brown kick)

White — Chris Butler 40-yard run (Chace Long kick)

Red — Davies 21-yard run (Dan Hadenfeldt kick)

White — Butler 1-yard run (kick failed)

White — Ryan Ommert 46-yard pass from Brett Lindstrom (Tim Reese run)

Att.: 22,415

Temperature: 40

Individual Leaders

White

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Butler, C.	16	118	7.4	40	2
Lindstrom, B.	19	35	1.8	18	0
Miller, R.	16	24	1.5	10	0
Gragert, N.	2	6	3.0	4	0
Kastl, P.	3	6	2.0	4	0
Reese, T.	1	6	6.0	6	0
Pitts, K.	1	2	2.0	2	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lindstrom, B.	5-10-0	50.0	87	1

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Miller, R.	2	11	5.5	12	0
Ommert, R.	1	46	46.0	46	1
Murphy, J.	1	18	18.0	18	0
Butler, C.	1	12	12.0	12	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	4	180	45.0	59
Roffers, T.J.	2	73	36.5	40

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	3	23	7.7	18	0
Groce, D.	2	12	6.0	7	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	4	112	28.0	32	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Clanton, J.	1	5	6	0	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	3	1	4	3-28	0	3-28
Rauenzahn, T.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Shanley, S.	0	4	4	0	0	0
Adams, D.	3	0	3	2-10	0	1-4
Wichmann, J.P.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Groce, D.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Bingham, R.	1	2	3	0	0	0

Walker, J.	1	2	3	1-1	0	0
Finley, C.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Booker, D.	0	3	3	0	0	0
Fries, G.	0	3	3	0	0	0
Estudillo, C.	2	0	2	1-2	0	0
Polk, C.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Burrow, J.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Boettner, M.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Miller, T.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Coleman, S.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Vedral, M.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Dilts, T.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Garrison, J.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Fischer, E.	1	0	1	0	1-10	0
Tata, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Tomasevich, C.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Thornton, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Lohr, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0
File, L.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Manning, S.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Scholting, C.	0	1	1	0	0	0

Red

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Diedrick, D.	10	55	5.5	20	0
Grixby, D.	6	25	4.2	15	0
Davies, J.	2	22	11.0	21	2
Cook, K.	3	14	4.7	14	1
Buckhalter, C.	6	12	2.0	5	0
Reese, T.	6	9	1.5	5	0
Wingender, A.	2	7	3.5	5	0
Chrisman, J.	6	-5	-0.8	30	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Chrisman, J.	2-9-0	18.2	27	0
Cook, K.	4-8-1	50.0	49	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Beveridge, T.	3	37	12.3	18	0
Wistrom, T.	1	20	20.0	20	0
Dabbert, W.	1	12	12.0	12	0
Thomas, W.	1	7	7.0	7	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Hadenfeldt, D.	4	187	46.8	55
Brown, J.	1	37	37.0	37
Barnes, B.	1	35	35.0	35

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Neal, D.	3	59	19.7	36	0
Newcombe, B.	1	5	5.0	5	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Ricketts, P.	2	45	22.5	26	0
Grixby, D.	1	-1	-1.0	0	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Johnson, B.	3	5	8	0	0	0
Stella, R.	5	1	6	0	0	0
Pippens, J.	4	2	6	0	0	0
Baker, R.	3	3	6	0	0	0
Kabongo, P.	1	5	6	0	0	0
Demerath, T.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Buller, C.	2	2	4	2-14	0	2-14
Blomeier, R.	1	3	4	1-1	0	0
Woodward, W.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Ricketts, P.	0	4	4	0	0	0
Grummert, M.	2	1	3	1-2	0	0
McClary, D.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Nelson, C.	0	3	3	0	0	0
Safrank, S.	0	3	3	0	0	0
McGinn, M.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Watchorn, T.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Warrior, A.	1	1	2	1-1	0	0
Tagos'i, J.	1	1	2	1-1	0	0
Ickes, B.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Ryan, B.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Burrow, J.	1	0	1	1-8	0	1-8
Tata, T.	1	0	1	1-6	0	0
Plooster, M.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Willis, C.	1	0	1	0	0	0
White, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hoke, A.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Kolowski, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Reese, T.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Smith, L.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Wingender, A.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Raiola, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0

"He can't even comprehend how good he can be."

— Teammate Jason Schwab

They Call Him 'Max'

Toniui Fonoti has come a long way in the past nine months. He has the experience of a fall, playing as a back-up, and of a full spring, 14 practices and the Red-White intrasquad game.

The freshman offensive guard has seen a lot. And as a result, "I feel a lot more confident than I was when I first came in," he said. "I know the plays more. I know the system more than I did."

When he began practice in August, he had to rely on his physical ability, which is considerable. He stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 330 pounds. Yet despite that size, he can move.

Offensive linemen have to have good feet to play in Nebraska's system.

"You've got to have some balance," said offensive line coach Milt Tenopir.

A lineman also has to have "spunk," according to Tenopir. "The intensity level is tough to teach," he said. "That's why you don't come across many of those kids right out of high school."

Fonoti is such a kid — he won't celebrate his 19th birthday until late November. But he's already being projected for greatness. "He doesn't understand how good he can be," Jason Schwab said.

"He can't even comprehend how good he can be."

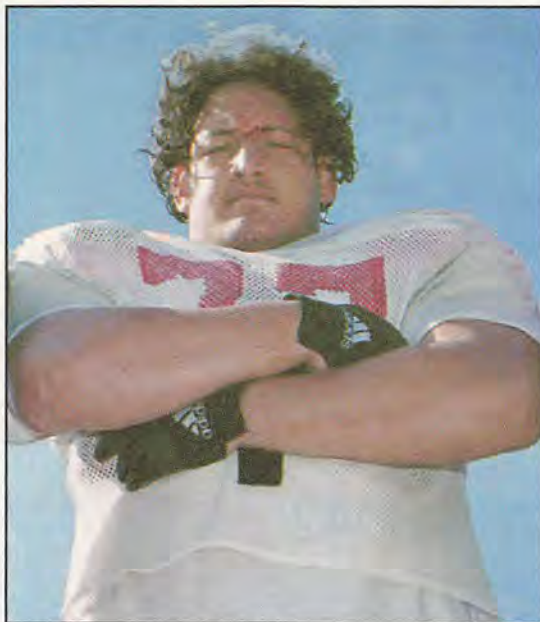
Schwab, an offensive tackle who has been granted a sixth season by the NCAA after missing what would have been his senior season because of a knee injury, is enthusiastic by nature.

In Fonoti's case, however, he might not be exaggerating. "He's doing everything he can to get better, and he's got the physical attributes to just be the best ever here, in my opinion, the best I've ever heard of," said Schwab. "He's that good. He's just a physical specimen for an offensive lineman."

He also has shown he can handle the emotional demands of playing right away.

"He's a mature kid to start with, you know? He doesn't have the mentality of an 18-year-old kid out of high school. He's a very mature person," Schwab said. "He just came in, stuck to it and learned the offense. It's amazing how fast he picked things up. And now he's right in there."

Schwab admits being a bit surprised by Fonoti's rapid rise. "At the beginning of the fall, I was kind of skeptical about whether or not he'd be able to play (as a



Toniui Fonoti saw extensive action as a true freshman, which is extremely rare for an offensive lineman at Nebraska.

true freshman)," he said.

Fonoti has made significant strides in nine months. "Most definitely," said Schwab.

That development was facilitated by his exposure to an offensive system similar to Nebraska's at Kahuku High School in Hauula, Hawaii, according to Tenopir.

In that sense, his background was comparable to that of former Cornhusker All-American and Outland Trophy winner Will Shields, one of only two other offensive linemen to play at Nebraska as true freshmen since the NCAA restored freshman eligibility in the early 1970s.

Jake Young, a two-time All-American center, was the other.

Center John Garrison, who arrived at Nebraska expecting to be a rush end, also played as a true freshman last season, but almost exclusively as the No. 1

deep-snapper.

In the fall, Fonoti got by not only on his size and strength but also with the help of the older linemen, who have nicknamed him "Max." — Volk was the first to call him that, according to Schwab.

"We couldn't pronounce his name. Everybody was calling him something different," Schwab said. "So Volk just said: 'Screw this. We're going to start calling him 'Max.'"

"So that's what we call him, 'Max.'"

Volk and the others were always quick to help, "big time," said "Max," who alternated with Jon Rutherford, a junior-to-be, at left guard with the first unit during the spring. "I mean, that was the biggest help I've ever had. They'd drill me throughout the fall, on my plays and what I have to do in a certain (defensive) look, on a certain play. So having them do that has helped me a lot.

"They were very patient. At times, I think they'd want to burst out. But they probably just held back because I was a freshman. I was new at this. I know it took a lot of patience to help me."

Even though he needed a little less help during the spring, he still doesn't consider himself a veteran. "Maybe when the year's over, when I become a sophomore . . . maybe," he said. "Right now I consider myself just a regular freshman, just like all the other freshmen. It won't be until next fall.

"Once next fall comes around, I'll probably call myself a veteran." ■

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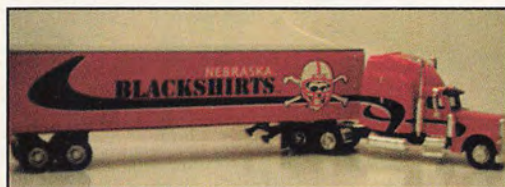
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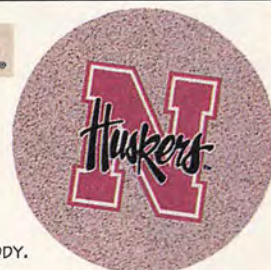
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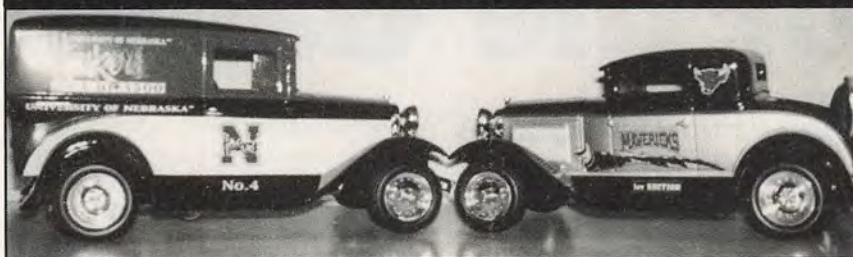
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Scholarship recruiting class, 1997

Player	Hometown	Status
Steve Alstadt	Fort Calhoun, Neb.	offensive guard, junior
Dion Booker	Oceanside, Calif.	free safety, junior
Correll Buckhalter	Mt. Olive, Miss.	I-back, senior
Jamie Burrow	Ames, Iowa	middle linebacker, junior
Ben Cornelson	Shawnee, Kan.	wingback, sophomore
Eric Crouch	Omaha, Neb.	quarterback, junior
Matt Davison	Tecumseh, Neb.	split end, senior
Chris Gustafson	Gallup, N.M.	linebacker, left team
*Brandon Harrison	Gainesville, Texas	defensive back, lettered 1997, dismissed from team
Kyle Kollmorgen	Lincoln, Neb.	offensive tackle, junior
*Glen Matthews	Chicago, Ill.	defensive tackle, left team
Bobby Newcombe	Albuquerque, N.M.	wingback, senior
Dominic Raiola	Honolulu, Hawaii	center, junior
Jon Rutherford	Midwest City, Okla.	offensive guard, junior
Erwin Swiney	Lincoln, Neb.	cornerback, junior
Kyle Vanden Bosch	Larchwood, Iowa	rush end, senior
Mark Vedral	Gregory, S.D.	weaksidelinebacker, junior
Dave Volk	Battle Creek, Neb.	offensive tackle
Joe Walker	Arlington, Texas	rover, senior
Dan White	Green Bay, Wis.	I-back, transferred
J.P. Wichmann	Shawnee, Kan.	rush end, junior
Tracey Wistrom	Webb City, Mo.	tight end, junior

*junior college transfer

'The Love of the Game'

High school teammates battle adversity, remain optimistic

By Mike Babcock

The injury occurred early in spring practice. Ben Cornelson stiff-armed a would-be tackler on a punt return and "my fingers kind of got locked back," he said. "I busted my metacarpal."

He was back for the next practice, however, with a soft cast on his left hand.

"This is nothing compared to what I've been through," he said.

During the spring two years ago, he was on his way home to Shawnee Mission, Kan., when he lost control of his Camaro and "ran into one of those big old highway signs," he said.

As a result of the injuries he suffered, one knee had to be reconstructed. But you can't keep a good man

down. "I came back quicker than I did with the shoulder (injury)," he said.

Shoulder? Because of a shoulder injury suffered while wrestling in high school, Cornelson didn't enroll with the other members of his scholarship recruiting class at Nebraska.

The sophomore-to-be and wingback is philosophical about the injuries. "It's not always going to be easy, I guess," he said. "You've always got to take every obstacle the Man puts in front of you and if you can overcome those, then you're (going to be) a better person, I think."

"I know a lot of people in my situation would have pitched it in and gone home. But I've wanted to play this sport since I was a little kid, and I'm not going to stop because of nagging injuries."

J.P. Wichmann, who was rehabilitating from a knee injury at the same time as Cornelson, has a similar attitude about adversity. "You've just got to take the punches as they come," he said.



Rush end J.P. Wichmann played in six games as a sophomore last season. He was credited with four tackles and one-and-one-half sacks. He appeared in three games as a redshirt freshman.

"That's the love of the game. You just fight through it, and you'll be on top."

Neither Cornelson nor Wichmann, a rush end, emerged from the spring atop the depth chart. But both of them remain optimistic and willing to contribute to the team in any way they can. "It's sort of my nature to keep quiet and then once it's my turn, I'm

out with an explosion," said Wichmann.

Cornelson and Wichmann have much in common besides determination. They were teammates at Northwest High School in Shawnee Mission and members of the 1997 recruiting class.

Another high school teammate, Grant Bunton, also came to Nebraska as a walk-on. But Bunton, an outside linebacker, played football for only a year before transferring to Kansas State, where he has focused on academics. "He has a 4.0 (grade-point average), I'm pretty sure," Wichmann said.

"It kind of changed things when Grant decided to take off," said Cornelson.

"He was kind of the comic relief."

He also was a familiar face, which made it a little easier for Wichmann and Cornelson to deal with the pressures of being college freshmen, both in the classroom and on the football field.

Their recruiting class, Tom Osborne's last as head coach, will provide a solid foundation for Coach Frank Solich's third team. They are among 18 of 22 scholarship players in that class still at Nebraska. And as many as 10 of those 18 are likely to start the opener against San Jose State.

The only 1997 scholarship recruits not still around are Chris Gustafson, Dan White, Brandon Harrison and Glen Matthews. Harrison and Matthews were junior college transfers.

Gustafson quit, and White transferred. Harrison earned a letter in 1997 before being dismissed from the team. And Matthews suffered an off-the-field injury before he was to report.

Everyone else has stayed, which hasn't surprised Wichmann. "I thought it was pretty solid," he said. "I never imagined anybody would want to quit when they're at a program like this."

Their class was highly publicized, in large measure because it included two quarterbacks, Eric Crouch and Bobby Newcombe, who moved to wingback two games into last season.

Newcombe was among six in the 1997 class who played as true freshmen. The others were Matt Davison, Correll Buckhalter, Erwin Swiney, Kyle Vanden Bosch and Joe Walker.

Six is a high number of true freshmen to play for the Cornhuskers. By comparison, only three played last season: Tonia Fonoti, Taylor Gehman and John Garrison.

And 18-of-22 is a high rate of retention. From 1990 to 1997, five or more players in every scholarship recruiting class left Nebraska before playing enough to earn at least one letter.

Yet Nebraska has lost only one of its scholarship recruits in 1998, Shawn McGann, and only two in 1999, Spencer Owen and Larry Henderson, a junior college transfer who had only one season of eligibility and decided to leave the team following last season's final home game.

Carl Crawford, who also signed a letter of intent in 1999, was the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' first pick in the second round of the major league baseball draft and signed for a reported \$1.2 million.

Cornelson can understand why some would leave before completing

their eligibility. Major college football is a "tough job," he said. "It's not easy to go to school all day and then come out here for four or five hours and practice. You have to be crazy to be here and give as much time as we do."

"But like (receivers) Coach (Ron) Brown says, it all comes out in the wash."

"What you put in is what you're going to get out of it."

Cornelson has put in a lot already. "With his numerous injuries and stuff, it's been a tough road for him," said Wichmann. "But he's doing pretty well now."

So is Wichmann. But even if he weren't, he wouldn't give up.

"You realize this is what you love and this is what you're here to do," he said. ■

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New Era

Former Butler Coach Collier 'so happy to be here'

By Mike Babcock

Barry Collier began the news conference to announce his hiring as Nebraska's 25th men's basketball coach by introducing his wife Annette and sons Casey (17), Brady (15) and Clay (12).

He did so as "an indication of what's important to me," he said.

A little over halfway through his remarks in the lounge in the Don Bryant Media Facility to a large crowd of print and electronic reporters as well as interested onlookers from the university, including Chancellor James Moeser, Collier interjected: "I'm just so happy to be here, I can't stand it."

Several minutes later, he concluded with: "There's going to be a resolve here to make Nebraska basketball nationally competitive. We are in this to win a national championship."

He paused, then added, in a matter of fact way: "We will win a national championship at Nebraska. I don't know how long that will take, and I don't know who will be coaching when that happens."

His understated humor elicited laughter.

"But that's going to happen," he said.

Optimism was the order of the day, just over three weeks after

Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne announced that Danny Nee's 14-year tenure as head coach was being terminated.

During those three-plus weeks, the search for a new coach focused on Tulsa's Bill Self, who turned down a salary package reportedly worth as much as \$1 million per year. Less than a week later, Byrne hired the 45-year-old Collier, the head coach at Butler University the past 11 seasons.

Butler, a member of the Midwestern Collegiate Conference, is located in Indianapolis.

Collier received a five-year contract with a base salary of \$200,000. Supplementary income, from such things as shoe contracts, camps and coaches shows, is not a matter of public record. By comparison, Nebraska football coach Frank Solich's base salary is \$209,250 and Byrne's base is \$206,475.

Byrne was asked what effect, if any, Collier's base salary might have on the base salaries of other coaches at the university. "We'll address that when we need to," Byrne replied.

Collier's last four teams won 22 or more games and made four consecutive post-season appearances, including three in the NCAA Tournament. Butler lost to NCAA Tournament runner-up Florida 69-68, on a last-second shot in overtime in the first round of the East Regional this year.

The Bulldogs finished with a 23-8 record, which included a 15-game winning streak.

Mike Warren/Daily Nebraskan



Barry Collier's last four Butler teams won 22 or more games and made four consecutive post-season appearances, including three in the NCAA Tournament. In 11 seasons at the Indianapolis school, he compiled a 196-132 record, with six postseason appearances.

"If you'll recall, a few weeks ago, I talked to many of you and talked about what we expected to have as far as a new basketball coach," Byrne said in introducing Collier.

"I talked specifically about someone who would fit into the culture of Nebraska . . . someone who valued the academic success of student-athletes the way we do here at the university, someone with a proven track record and someone who had the same values as the rest of us in the Midwest."

Given his record, Collier qualifies on all those counts. All 36 players who have completed their senior seasons under Collier will have graduated at the completion of Butler's spring semester.

"We've been successful with the theory that you can be the best you can be academically and in basketball if you'll work in that direction, if you'll make sacrifices socially," said Collier.

The new coach wasted no time getting involved with what he called his "extended family." He and his family returned to Indianapolis on a Tuesday, after visiting Lincoln. He accepted the job that night. He met with his team at Butler later that night, then flew back to Lincoln early the next morning.

Before the news conference, he met for an hour with his new team.

"He's very low-key, soft-spoken," said Kimani Ffriend, a senior-to-be who had told the Omaha

NU At A Glance

(11-19 OVERALL, 4-12 BIG 12)

Returning

(Next season's eligibility)

	Pts	Rbs
Cookie Belcher, 6-4, Sr.	—	—
*Steffon Bradford, 6-6, Sr.	11.1	8.1
Ross Buckendahl, 6-5, Sr.	0.4	1.1
*Cary Cochran, 6-1, Jr.	7.9	2.5
Brian Conklin, 6-11, Fr.	—	—
Matt Davison, 6-1, Sr.	2.4	1.1
*Kimani Ffriend, 6-11, Sr.	12.0	8.8
*Rodney Fields, 6-2, Sr.	4.2	1.9
Louis Truscott, 6-7, Jr.	8.2	5.7
*Danny Walker, 6-1, Sr.	9.6	2.0
(Walk-ons Craig Wortmann, Ben Chesnut, Nick Lahners and Ryan Thomas played in five games or fewer.)		

* -- indicates started 11 or more games

Lost

*Larry Florence, 6-5	13.0	5.4
Kenny Booker, 6-8, So.	2.2	2.4

Newcomer

John Robinson, 6-1	—	—
--------------------	---	---

Recruit

Eddie Baker, 6-6	—	—
------------------	---	---

World-Herald in the wake of Nee's firing that he might consider transferring.

However, "I'm very happy right now," Ffriend said. "This is a start of a new era. We're all looking forward to the change. I'm very excited. I can say that we're moving ahead."

The focus will be on winning not rebuilding, according to Collier.

"I think it would be a disservice to next year's team to say that we're just going to be . . . satisfied with whatever happens," he said. "We hope to be good. We want to win now."

"So we'll be working to that end."

The Cornhuskers' style of play under Collier won't be determined until he has had an opportunity to familiarize himself with his players. "I want you to know that what I would want listed as our style of play is a winning style of play," he said. "I don't care whether we play fast or we play slow."

"We're going to play in such a way that gives us the best chance to win with the talent that we have. What we're interested in doing is maximizing the abilities of each of our players."

"So if you think I'm shot-faking or lip-faking to give you that answer on style, I truly believe that you must do what your team can do and not

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Butler ranked second nationally in scoring defense this past season, allowing 55.7 points per game. The Bulldogs had 93 fewer turnovers than their opponents, and 143 more rebounds.

Ranking second in scoring defense, behind Princeton, "people would say, well, you play slow-down, half-court defense," said Collier. "Well, we averaged almost a 15-point scoring margin.

"So we averaged close to 70. And that's more than the national average."

Collier said his "coaching family" includes Jud Heathcote, Marv Harshman, Don Monson and Mike Montgomery, for whom he was an assistant at Stanford before going to Butler.

He also was an assistant at Oregon while Byrne was athletic director there.

That association influenced his decision to come to Nebraska. "Any kind of pre-existing relationship makes it easier to have discussions and know where you're coming from," he said.

Being a basketball coach at a football school apparently won't be a problem.

"First of all, I'm a frustrated non-football coach," Collier said. "I love football. I think that it is, in this day and age, a huge plus to have successful programs in every sport. Nebraska football is the best, and has been for a long time. And I think that we can complement one another."

Later, Collier brought up the subject of football again, unsolicited.

"I thought of another thing I wanted to say about the football question and the style of play," he said. "I'd love to play smash-mouth basketball, (to) borrow that phrase from football.

"I think if you've seen our teams play recently, you've seen a level of confidence there that makes this coach pretty happy. And we will be working in that direction. We'll be looking for ways to do that from all of our coaches, in the aggressiveness and toughness that their kids have to train and play."

Collier described his value system with a metaphor. In addition to his faith and his immediate family, it includes an extended family of "our immediate team and beyond that the (athletic) department at large and the university at large. That's kind of the order of things," he said. "It's a five-legged table, and you can't pull out

one of those legs and have that table be sturdy."

As he was concluding his remarks by describing an "immediate plan," he was interrupted by the ring of a cellular phone. "Our immediate plan is to answer the phone," he said.

Then he resumed making his point. "Our immediate plan is to follow a system that I think is very simple in success, and that is to take the first step and then after that, the second thing we'll do is take the next step and just keep doing that until we get better and where we want to go," he said.

With that, the Collier era of Cornhusker basketball has begun. ■

Barry Collier Year-by-Year at Butler

Season	Record	Postseason
1989-1990	6-22	
1990-1991	18-11	0-1 in NIT
1991-1992	21-10	0-1 in NIT
1992-1993	11-17	
1993-1994	16-13	
1994-1995	15-12	
1995-1996	19-8	
1996-1997	23-10	0-1 in NCAA
1997-1998	22-11	0-1 in NCAA
1998-1999	22-10	2-1 in NIT
1999-2000	23-8	0-1 in NCAA
Overall	196-132	3 NIT, 3 NCAA



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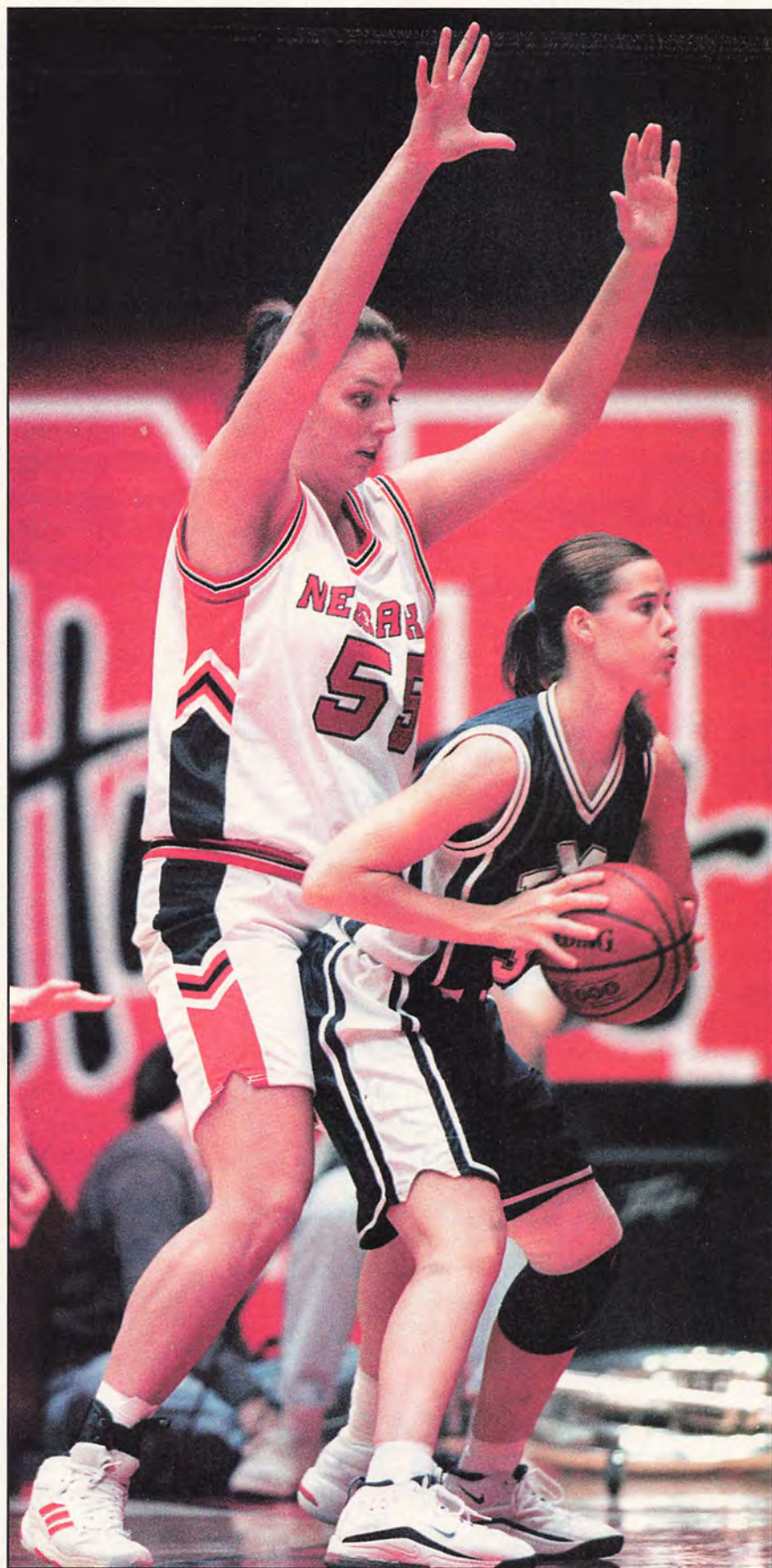
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Casey Leonhardt, a 6-foot-5 center, averaged 9.8 points and 6.2 rebounds as a part-time starter.

Season Wears on NU

Roller-coaster season screeches to halt in NCAA

By Steve Sipple

They sweat bullets just to reach the NCAA Tournament, winning six of their last seven games to sneak into the Big Dance for the third straight season. All six were "must wins." With two losses in those final seven games, the Nebraska women's basketball team would have likely landed in the Women's NIT.

With all due respect to the WNIT, the Nebraska women wanted no part of it.

Mid-February to mid-March was an emotional, physical and mental grind for the Huskers, and perhaps pervasive late-season stress caught up with them in their NCAA Midwest Regional first-round game against Boston College March 17 in Charlottesville, Va. The Eagles, seeded fifth, immediately knocked the 12th-seeded Huskers on their heels with full-court pressure defense, which forced five turnovers in a six-possession span and helped produce an 8-2 lead that soon ballooned to 18-6.

Boston College — a polished and disciplined squad that tied Rutgers for third in the Big East Conference — was never seriously threatened thereafter, sending Nebraska home with a 93-76 loss and a final record of 18-13.

The Huskers' offense was productive against the Eagles — NU shot 50.9 percent from the field and 73.7 percent from the free-throw line.

After they settled down and diffused the full-court pressure, the Huskers were able to run their offense

Scott Braun

in respectable fashion.

Nebraska remained in striking distance for much of the second half. Trouble was, the Huskers couldn't come up with nearly enough defensive stops to pose a serious threat. Defense requires players to dig deep and find an extra source of energy. When they tried to tap their reserve, the Huskers apparently found their tanks were nearing empty.

"I thought it was terrible," Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford said of his team's defense. "We were a step slow reacting all night."

The Huskers' defense evoked memories of their struggles during a lackluster non-conference season. They entered the 1999-2000 campaign with their sights set on the Sweet 16, but they found themselves taking life one game at a time as they entered the Big 12 Conference part of their schedule with a humbling 6-5 mark.

And soon began Nebraska's scramble to reach the NCAA Tournament. The Huskers' prospects looked particularly bleak the night of Feb. 9, after they blew a 10-point lead in the final six minutes and dropped a 78-75 decision to Colorado in Boulder, Colo. The loss was Nebraska's third straight and dropped it to 11-9 overall and 6-6 in the conference. Heck, even the WNIT wasn't a sure bet.

With its back against the wall, Nebraska pulled together admirably. The Huskers beat Kansas in Lincoln, Neb., then played one of their best games of the season in a 66-62 loss at 12th-ranked Texas Tech.

Nebraska proceeded to rattle off six straight wins, highlighted by an 80-67 victory against Kansas in the second round of the Big 12 Tournament March 8 in Kansas City, Mo. It was the Huskers' third win of the season against the talented-but-underachieving Jayhawks.

Afterward, Sanderford told his players they had locked up an NCAA Tournament invitation. "If we ain't dancing now, a lot of people ain't dancing," he said.

Twenty-four hours later, however, 10th-ranked Iowa State hammered Nebraska 85-48 in the conference semifinals on national television, and the Huskers again began agonizing over their NCAA chances. The 50-year-old Sanderford went from confident to concerned. Would the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee reward Nebraska for its 10-6 league record, good for fifth place in the nation's second-ranked conference according to WBCA power rankings?

Or would the committee bypass

the Huskers because No. 39 Kansas was the only team they defeated among College.RPI's top 40?

"I just hope they don't put too much emphasis on that (Iowa State) game," Sanderford said the day after the defeat. "After watching the film, it's obvious we were a tired basketball team. I don't like to make excuses. But I'd like to play them again in a week."

Nebraska's roller-coaster season screeched to a halt with the loss to Boston College, thereby ending the careers of the most decorated senior class in school history. The Huskers had never reached three straight NCAA Tournaments before former Nebraska coach Angela Beck recruited guard Nicole Kubik, guard/forward Brooke Schwartz, forward/center Charlie Rogers and forward Cisco Gilmore.

Kubik, Schwartz and Rogers each finished in the school's career 1,000-point club, making them the first trio to do it in the same class. Gilmore provided a physical presence during a career spent mostly as an often-used reserve.

The 5-foot-10 Kubik, a native of Cambridge, Neb., was a first-team All-Big 12 selection this season. She goes down as one of the best players in pro-

NU At A Glance (18-13 OVERALL, 10-6 BIG 12)

Returning

	Pts	Rbs
Candace Blackbird, 6-0, So.	—	—
Amanda Buchholz, 5-7, So.	1.6	0.8
Jennifer Jaracz, 6-0, Jr.	0.5	1.3
Stephanie Jones, 6-2, So.	5.6	4.0
Isha Kelley, 5-9, So.	1.2	1.0
*Casey Leonhardt, 6-5, Sr.	9.8	6.2
Shahidrah Roberts, 5-9, So.	3.3	1.7
Paige Sutton, 6-2, So.	4.2	2.6
Amanda Went, 5-9, Sr.	5.8	1.6
Monique Whitfield, 6-1, Sr.	—	—

Lost

*Naciska Gilmore, 6-0	3.8	3.0
*Nicole Kubik, 5-10	17.4	4.5
Karsen Muller, 5-6	—	—
*Melody Peterson, 5-9	7.8	4.3
*Charlie Rogers, 6-2	9.8	7.9
*Brooke Schwartz, 5-9	13.0	3.8

Newcomers

Greichaly Cepero, 6-2, Fr.	—	—
Margaret Richards, 5-9, So.	—	—

Recruits

K.C. Cowgill, 5-7, Fr.	—	—
Shannon Howell, 5-10, Fr.	—	—
Alexa Johnson, 6-1, Fr.	—	—
Katie Morse, 6-4, Fr.	—	—

* — indicates started 11 or more games.



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gram history — and perhaps the finest defensive player to wear a Husker jersey.

"The thing I'm most pleased about is all her hard work paid off," said Sanderford, who took over as Nebraska's head coach before Kubik's sophomore season. "When Angela Beck signed Nicole, I don't think anybody thought she'd become a first-team all-conference player. When I came here, she was a good player. But she made herself into a great player."

Kubik finished as the school's career leader in steals (418) and is second in assists (603) and fourth in scoring (1,867).

The seniors will be difficult to replace, and so will junior point guard Melody Peterson. A transfer from Stanford, Peterson left the squad March 27. Originally declared ineligible this season because of NCAA transfer rules, she was granted eligibility in December and started the final 21 games, averaging 7.8 points and 3.8 assists while developing into one of the team's top defensive players.

Sanderford said that while Nebraska will miss Peterson's experience and ball-hawking prowess, he is confident in his group of returning guards. Senior-to-be Amanda Went, sophomore Isha Kelley, sophomore Amanda Buchholz and freshman recruit Shannon Howell are expected to vie for time at the point.

Nebraska will have two other seniors next season — 6-5 center Casey Leonhardt and 6-1 forward Monique Whitfield, who sat out this season rehabilitating an offseason knee injury.

In addition, the Huskers' inside game should receive a boost from 6-2 forward Amanda Cleveland of Lancaster, Texas, who has received medical clearance to participate. The former prep All-American was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder during her freshman season in 1997 and has been sidelined since.

Another former prep All-American, forward Steph Jones of Omaha, Neb., will also return next season after suffering a season-ending knee injury last December after a promising start.

Despite a roster that will feature no less than seven new faces — including four first-year freshman recruits — Nebraska will enter the 2000-2001 season with high expectations. With Sanderford, expectations will always be high.

"We're going to expect to win 20 games and be in the NCAA Tournament, and be a factor in the Big 12." ■

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All the Tools

Chandler leads Huskers to Big 12 title, makes a splash nationally

By Mark Derowitsch

Chris Chandler isn't exactly a household name in track and field circles. Before this winter, few people even knew who he was.

This winter, he managed to turn a few heads with an outstanding performance at the United States Indoor Track and Field Championships. But to call him an Olympic contender would be very premature.

Don't know much about the junior at the University of Nebraska? All he is is one of the most talented up-and-coming sprinters in the United States, even if few have ever heard of him.

Chandler made a major impact on the track and field world during his first season as a Husker. At his first Big 12 Conference meet, Chandler won both the 55- and 200-meter dashes against some of the top sprinters in the country to lead Nebraska to the men's team championship.

Yet his biggest splash came the very next week, when Chandler won the 200-meter title against some of the nation's best sprinters. That one race has Chandler thinking about his chances of representing the United States during the Olympic Games this summer.

"I think I have a chance," he said. "That's my goal, to make the team. I know I can do it."

Chandler put himself in that position one day last February, when he stunned the track and field world by winning the 200 at the USA Indoor meet. Granted, the top sprinter in the world, Michael Johnson, didn't compete that day, but Chandler still out-raced a talented group to reach the finish line first.

The Starke, Fla., native won with a



Junior Chris Chandler won the 55- and 200-meter dashes to lead Nebraska to the men's team title at the Big 12 Indoor Championships in Ames, Iowa.

time of 20.84 seconds, two-hundredths of a second ahead of runner-up Brian Lewis.

Only a week before, Chandler claimed two titles at the Big 12 conference meet.

He couldn't run at a high level for three meets in a row. At the NCAA

Championships, Chandler failed to advance to the finals in either the 55 or 200.

Even so, it's safe to call his first season as a Husker successful.

"I proved myself," he said.

Chandler came to Nebraska this fall after a two-year stay at Wallace State

Community College. He chose to run in the cold after Husker assistant coach Billy Maxwell sold him on Nebraska.

Chandler has a troubled past, but Maxwell stood by him while he was recruiting the talented sprinter.

"Billy's a good coach who stayed with me to the end. when I was in junior college," Chandler said. "I came here for him."

Maxwell had reason to stick by Chandler, who looks like a natural sprinter with his lanky body and who acts like one with his ever-increasing self confidence.

At Wallace State, Chandler was the 1999 junior college 55-meter dash champion during the indoor season, and followed that with a second-place finish in the 200 outdoors. He left junior college as a nine-time All-American in just two seasons.

He was a standout in high school as well, placing second in the 200 during the 1997 Florida state high school meet. The only sprinter to beat Chandler that day as John Capel, who is now at the University of Florida and won the NCAA title in the event in 1999.

How good is Chandler? Very good, according to Maxwell.

Maxwell knows a thing or two about Olympic-quality sprinters. When he was an assistant coach at Tennessee, Maxwell coached Willie

Gault, who later won an Olympic gold medal and had a long professional football career with the Chicago Bears and the Los Angeles Raiders.

Maxwell puts Chandler on Gault's level.

"I've coached a lot of great sprinters over the years, and Chris certainly has more potential than any other guys I've had," Maxwell said. "Now it's up to him to use the potential. But if he works hard and stays with it, he could be a very successful runner on the international level."

"He has all the tools."

So where does this leave Chandler?

Despite his accomplishments this indoor season, he is still a longshot as far as the Olympics are concerned.

"He can do it this year, but it's going to be difficult for him," Maxwell

said. "Can he compete at that level? Absolutely. Will he do it this year? He could, but realistically his best chance will come down the road."

As the Huskers look to wrap up the outdoor season, Chandler isn't consumed by his Olympic dreams. He's just a college athlete, looking to make an impact closer to home.

Chandler's desire early in the year was to win the Big12 Conference indoor title for Nebraska.

"This was very important to me," Chandler said. "Coming from junior college, I've never had a chance to win anything as a team. I'll do all I can because I wanted a ring. I wanted a ring bad."

Mission accomplished. He has more challenges ahead of them, ones Chandler will deal with in due time. ■

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10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with softball pitcher JENNY VOSS



Jenny Voss is a senior on the Nebraska softball team. The product of Ankeny, Iowa, is a two-time All-American and ranks as the Huskers' all-time leader in career pitching victories.

Q: When did you first start to pitch?

A: The first time I actually pitched was when I was 5 years old, well if you want to call that a pitch. They would sail way high in the sky.

Q: What position would you play if you weren't pitching?

A: If I had my choice, I would probably play centerfield. I have such a small space. I'm confined to this little circle on the mound. In the outfield, you have all this free area to roam.

Q: Why did you choose Nebraska?

A: A lot of my family actually came here so I had a little bit of the "Go Big Red" in my blood before I really ever knew anything about it. I was going to come here whether they wanted me or not. I would have walked on if they wouldn't have offered me a scholarship. I just felt at home here.

Q: What role did assistant coach Lori Sippel play in the decision?

A: I really wanted to go to a place that had a specific pitching coach and someone that I had heard of before. There are not a lot of schools that actually have people specified just for that.

Q: What's the coldest temperature you've ever pitched at?

A: There was a game in high school that was maybe 32 degrees. It wasn't snowing though.

Q: What will you remember most about your career at Nebraska?

A: The thing I'll remember most is just the people that I've had the chance to get to know. It's an awesome experience when you come together with a team.

Q: What's your most embarrassing moment?

A: My cleat got caught in my shoelace and I fell just running out to the mound in Texas. Of course their stadium was full and the whole crowd just started giving me crap.

Q: What goes through your mind when someone hits a home run off you?

A: I really don't have the time to sit and let myself stew over it because I've got to face somebody else. The best thing for me to be able to do is to come right back from that and show I don't really care.

Q: What's the dumbest question you've ever been asked by a reporter?

A: When I was having my shoulder problems, someone asked if it hurt or not. I guess they thought it was all in my mind.

Q: Did you ever play baseball with boys?

A: They usually wouldn't let me play with them. Unless of course it was school, then I'd always be the first girl picked to play. ■

— Todd Henrichs

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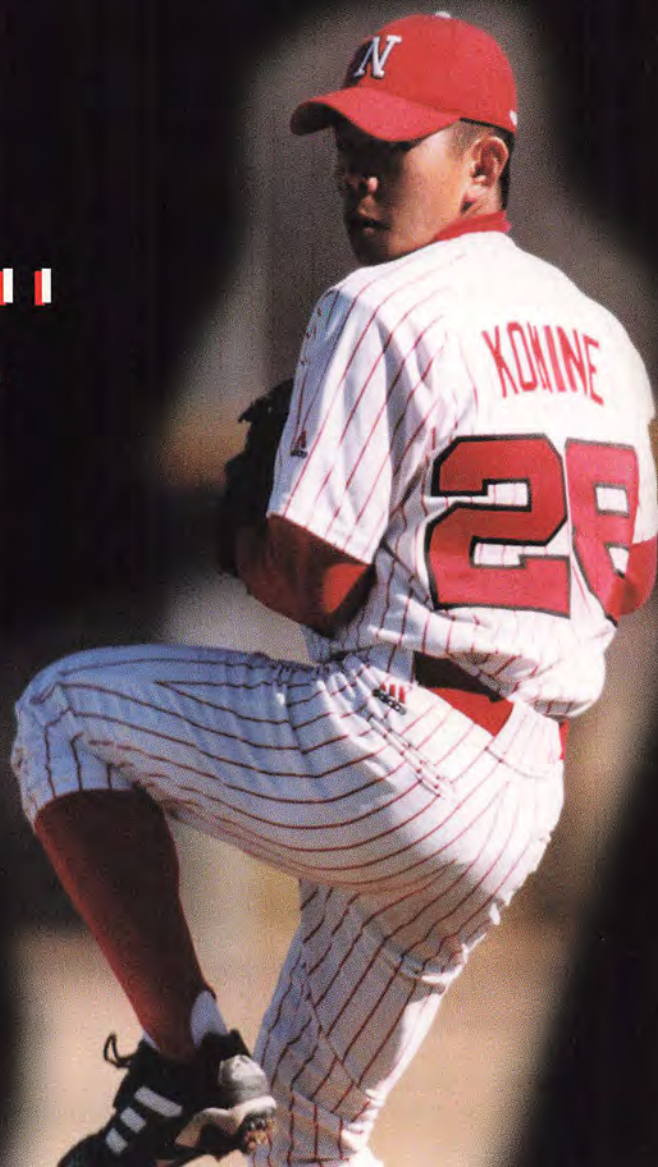
March 25	Missouri	1 pm
March 26	Missouri	1 pm
March 28	Colorado St.	5, 7 pm
March 29	Colorado St.	5, 7 pm
March 30	Wichita St.	6, 8 pm
April 8	Baylor	4:30 pm
April 9	Baylor	1 pm
April 11	Missouri-KC	4, 6 pm
April 18	Iowa State	4:30 pm
April 19	Creighton	7 pm
April 25	Drake	2, 4 pm
April 26	Wisconsin	1, 3 pm
April 29	Texas	5 pm
April 30	Texas	1 pm
May 5	Kansas	6, 8 pm



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b a s e b a l l

March 7	Nebraska-Omaha, 1-9	2 pm
March 17	Oklahoma, 1-9	6:30 pm
March 18	Oklahoma, 1-9	2 pm
March 19	Oklahoma, 1-9	1 pm
March 24	Texas Tech, 1-9	6:30 pm
March 25	Texas Tech, 1-9	2 pm
March 26	Texas Tech, 1-9	1 pm
March 28	North Dakota St., 1-9	3 pm
April 4	NW Missouri St., 1-9	6 pm
April 7	Kansas, 1-9	6:30 pm
April 8	Kansas, 1-9	2 pm
April 9	Kansas, 1-9	1 pm
April 11	Creighton, 1-9	6:30 pm
April 18	Western Illinois, 1-9	7 pm
April 19	Western Illinois, 1-9	3 pm
April 21	Texas A&M, 1-9	6:30 pm
April 22	Texas A&M, 1-9	2 pm
April 24	UW-Milwaukee (DH)	4, 7 pm
April 25	UW-Milwaukee	2 pm
April 28	Iowa State, 1-9	6:30 pm
April 29	Iowa State, 1-9	2 pm
April 30	Iowa State, 1-9	1 pm
May 9	Northern Iowa, 1-9	6:30 pm
May 12	Fresno State, 1-9	6:30 pm
May 13	Fresno State, 1-9	2 pm
May 14	Fresno State, 1-9	1 pm



Comparisons Only Natural

Option quarterback from Crouch's alma mater commits early to NU

By James Hale

When all the smoke had cleared surrounding Nebraska's 2000 recruiting class, the only real knock anybody could find on the class was that it didn't include a quarterback.

Well, don't ever tell the Nebraska coaching staff it didn't do something in recruiting because they will set you straight in a hurry.

Before anybody could take a deep breath and put their feet up to relax from the tussles of the 2000 recruiting wars, Nebraska already had commitment No. 1 in the books for the class of 2001. Guess what . . . he's a quarterback.

Mike McLaughlin (6-foot-1, 175 pounds, 4.5 40-yard dash time) Millard (Neb.) North will follow in the footsteps of current Husker starting quarterback Eric Crouch, who also starred at Millard North. It's no accident that another Millard North quarterback is being recruited to run option football at Nebraska.

"Before Eric, we had Todd Doxzon who is with the Miami Dolphins now, and the option is what we do," said Millard North Coach Fred Petito. "Our kids work at the option, and we have been fortunate to have the type of athlete to come through who can run the option. Everything in our offense goes through the mid-line our quarterback/fullback. Our fullback, Judd Davies, is down at Lincoln right now."

"Other teams may put their best kid at I-back, but it's at quarterback for us. We tailor things through the quarterbacks, we rep them up and get really sound in the option game. We break things down well, so they do things in the option game naturally. Their speed out of the meshes is very

good, and they always get quality repetition in the offseason."

In all, six quarterbacks from Millard North have gone on to all-state status. Nick Pierson is now a linebacker at Nebraska at Omaha, and before him the Everton brothers, Jimmy and Troy ran the Mustangs' offense to postseason honors.

McLaughlin has many intangibles going for him, and one of the brightest is tutorial sessions with Crouch.

"These guys create quite a bond, as we have had six quarterbacks here that have all been all-state kids," Petito said. "Eric comes back, the Dox comes back, and Nick Pierson before that, and they can share a lot of things. They have been through the competition before, and there is a lot of insight that can be given from the older guys to the younger guys."

"When Mac was just starting out, Eric was one player that lent his expertise to him. That is so good because the older quarterbacks want to see everybody succeed, and they will do anything to help."

McLaughlin was a starting wide receiver before getting under center for a start in the final game of his sophomore season. He started both playoff games

as well that year before taking over full-time last season. McLaughlin was impressive a year ago, rushing for 1,774 yards and 22 touchdowns. He also proved he could throw, passing for nearly 600 yards.

McLaughlin has great natural talents but admits he has enjoyed his tutorial sessions with Crouch.

"Ever since I was a freshman, I have been pretty good friends with Kyle Crouch, Eric's brother, who started at cornerback for us last year," McLaughlin said. "I got to know Eric pretty well through Kyle."



As a junior, Millard North's Mike McLaughlin rushed for 1,774 yards and 22 touchdowns.

"We have practiced option work and passing before, when he comes up occasionally. He came up today and said he was going to come over spring break and start working out with us in track, with some option work, and to loosen up the arm after his shoulder surgery. So, we have built a relationship that way and have gotten familiar with each other."

It's an honor to play quarterback at Millard North, but with that comes responsibility. When you are the Mustangs' quarterback you are carrying a ton of tradition on your back.

"Ever since Doxzon came along to Eric Crouch to Nick Pierson and so on, it's obvious that Coach Petito has a good eye for quarterbacks," McLaughlin said. "He works with his quarterbacks when they are young, for about four years, and knows that how he works with us will allow us to progress pretty well. For the past 15 years, I guess, he has had some pretty good quarterbacks come through."

It's natural that everybody will compare McLaughlin to Crouch, and that is fine with the senior to be.

"How can you not want to be compared to a great player like Eric," McLaughlin said. "He is doing great at Nebraska right now, and I kind of relate myself a little bit to him. We are from the same school and the same wing-bone offense. Coach Petito taught Eric just like he taught me. So, for our styles of play, I think we are pretty similar."

McLaughlin still has one more year to perfect his craft at Millard North, however, there is no question that he is already regarded as one of the top option quarterbacks in the country.

"As far the option game, Mike is as good as they come," Petito said. "He handles the dive and pitch very well. Mike carries the ball quite a bit because he is our best ball carrier. He has good speed (10.8 100 meters), is a real disciplined kid and makes good decisions on the move."



Mike McLaughlin is Nebraska's first commitment for 2001.

"Mike has great composure and never gets rattled in a game. He threw for about 600 yards last year, but in high school, the game is so short, and when you rush the ball as well as we do, we hate to give one away. We get him on the perimeter quite a bit on some waggles and things as far as throwing, and he is good on the play-pass. Mike's arm is getting stronger, but his main deal is that he is very solid in the option game."

As far as McLaughlin's talents and his commitment to Nebraska, it looks like the perfect fit.

"This is a nice progression for him, if he has that kind of ability, which he does," Petito said. "It is kind of a trip to watch Eric and what he does."

"For Mac, this is what he has worked for. I knew he was going to go. As soon as they offered him, I knew that he would accept. We are pretty excited around school, and everybody knows that it is good for him and good for our program to. We get to keep things in-state here."

Crouch had a banner year in 1999, rushing for 889 yards, at 4.9 yards per carry and 16 touchdowns. He also passes for 1,269 yards and seven touchdowns. Crouch had to work his way into the starting lineup last year, but went on to earn Big 12 Co-Offensive Player of the Year honors.

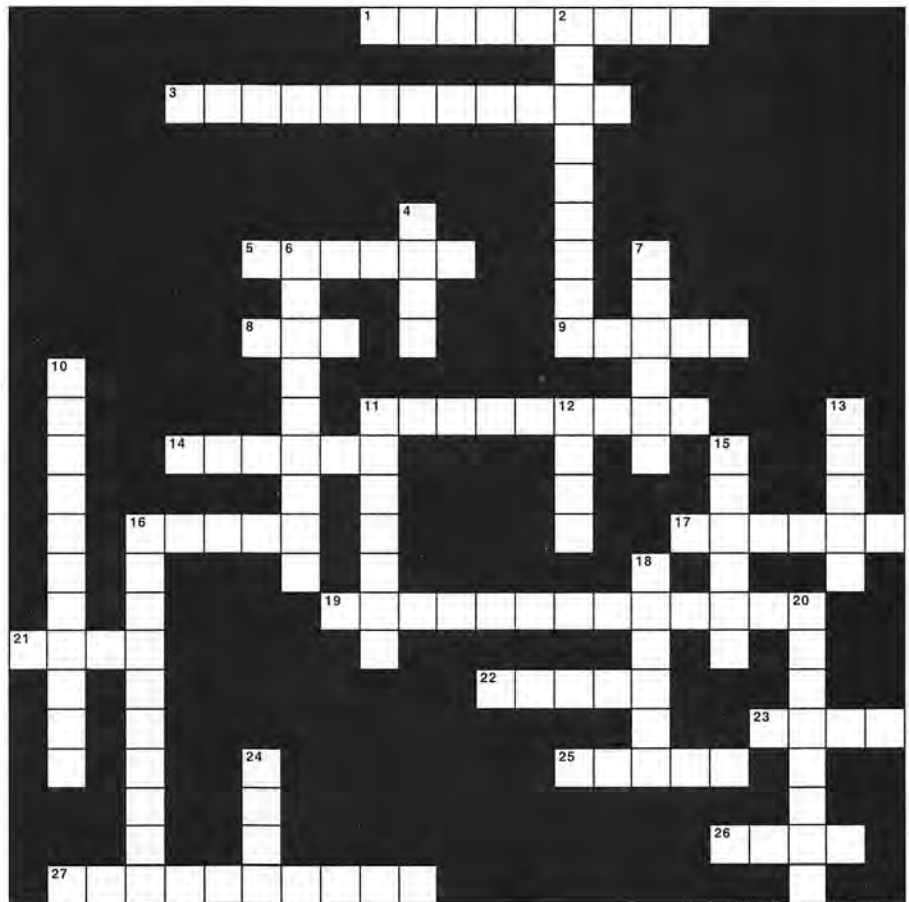
"I am not at all surprise at the success Eric has had at Nebraska because I have been around him in a day-to-day basis," Petito said. "He has had a tough time at Nebraska because they redshirted him, he had the surgery, and he had the media noting that Bobby Newcombe was the man."

"What he has accomplished doesn't surprise me, and I am proud of how he has handled things, including adversity."

The Cornhuskers didn't sign a quarterback in last year's class. How ironic is it that Nebraska doesn't sign a quarterback in 1999, but their first commitment in the 2000 class is a quarterback? For McLaughlin, the fact that he may be the only quarterback recruit signed by the Huskers in the last two years is certainly a plus.

"Things are looking pretty good for me," he said. "When I come up there for my freshman year, they will have three scholarship quarterbacks on campus, including me. There is Jammal Lord, and Eric as well, but Eric will be a senior. They have a couple of kids who have walked on. All of them are great players, so it will be a tight race up there, and Nebraska always finds people for the quarterback position to help them win." ■

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- 1 Leading rusher in Fiesta Bowl
- 3 2000 home opener
- 5 NU's No. 65
- 8 1999 Spring Game winner
- 9 NU strength coach
- 11 Dan Hadenfeldt's hometown
- 14 Leading kickoff returner in 1999
- 16 NU's No. 26
- 17 New defensive line coach
- 19 1998 opener opponent
- 21 NU's No. 13
- 22 NU's only 1999 loss
- 23 New defensive coordinator
- 25 Chad Kelsay's younger brother
- 26 NU quarterback coach
- 27 Russ Hochstein's hometown

DOWN

- 2 2000 road opener
- 4 Jon Vedral's younger brother
- 6 Frank Solich's hometown
- 7 NU's No. 15
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APRIL SOLUTION



It's Time To Move On

Husker center Ffriend accustomed to change, but coach's dismissal 'was pretty tough'



Mike BABCOCK

he's been here a long time. But I guess it's just time to move on.

"He said the same thing to me. He told me I must just come in here and work hard, that I have the talent and ability to do great things, so just listen to the new coach and everything will be OK."

Ffriend, a second-team All-Big 12 center his first season at Nebraska, felt better about the transition to a new head coach, who had yet to be identified that day. "It made it much easier" he said. "It showed me that he respected the decision that was made and (that) there wasn't any animosity."

"He just wants the best for us. It is a positive on my part."

Nee handled his dismissal in silence, declining interview requests from those that had criticized him and had even seemed to take some measure of satisfaction in his plight.

Claims to the contrary, the criticism often bordered on the personal, and Nee could have lashed out at his critics, assuming he would have been given an unbiased forum. But he did not. That is not to say he won't at some point. But for now at least, he is moving on, as he encouraged Ffriend to do.

Such transitions are rarely easy, for players or for coaches. Barry Collier, Nee's successor, met with his team at Butler for an hour late on the night he accepted the Nebraska job.

Saying good-bye to his players made for a "very difficult and long night," he said.

Late the next morning, he met with his players at Nebraska for an hour, to begin the lengthy process of building relationships. "I like the way that went," he told reporters afterward.

"But this is not about a one-hour meeting or a one-day race. We're in this for the long run."

Ffriend was encouraged by that first meeting. "There has to be that trust. I think it's just going to come to trust," he said. "We have to be willing to accept this so that he can accept us."

"I think if we can do that, we can have a good relationship."

THE DAY WAS Danny Nee's last in the office that had been his at the Bob Devaney Sports Center for the past 14 years. "The very last day," said Kimani Ffriend. "It was pretty tough."

Nee asked Ffriend to come in and sit with him for a few minutes.

"You know, I was kind of touched," Ffriend said. "I couldn't believe that he was leaving after so many years. I mean,

"I guess some of the guys still feel that void Coach Nee left. But we have to move on. He (Collier) addressed it in the meeting, saying he didn't recruit any of us but we are his extended family."

"Coach Nee brought me up, but I'm looking forward to the change."

Ffriend, who is not one to hide his emotions, had a very good relationship with Nee, his third coach in as many seasons — he played at two junior colleges before transferring to Nebraska. In addition, he is from Jamaica and has played organized basketball for only the past three years.

He is accustomed to change. But that hasn't made handling a fourth any easier.

"That's why I have to say it's a lot more pressure on me than the rest," he said. "I'm coming from another country and to get to know the new coach . . . you have to start all over again."

"It's pretty hard. But it's something I'm willing to do."

His immediate reaction to Nee's firing was: "Man, again?"

And his feelings were intensified by the frustration of an 11-19 season.

"I was hoping that it would be a great season," he said. "But it didn't turn out that way."

"So it was pretty intense. And I was depressed."

Those feelings began to fade with Collier's first meeting.

"He seems like a pretty nice guy," said Ffriend. "He knows what he wants. And he demands a lot. That's what we need right now, somebody to push us to that level where we're at our best."

While Ffriend talked with a couple of reporters after the news conference at which Collier's hiring was announced, Athletic Director Bill Byrne asked: "You OK, big guy?"

Ffriend assured Byrne that he was.

His acceptance of the change didn't diminish his affection for the coach who recruited him, and who handled the dismissal with class and character his critiques refused to acknowledge.

"That was pretty sad," said Ffriend. "He's been here a long time. But people just want a change. He accepted it, that it was just time for him to go. He's just moving one."

"We had a light chat. That was it." ■



Kimani Ffriend will be playing for his fourth coach in four seasons.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years. Mike can be reached at mbd@inetnebr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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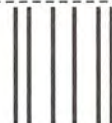
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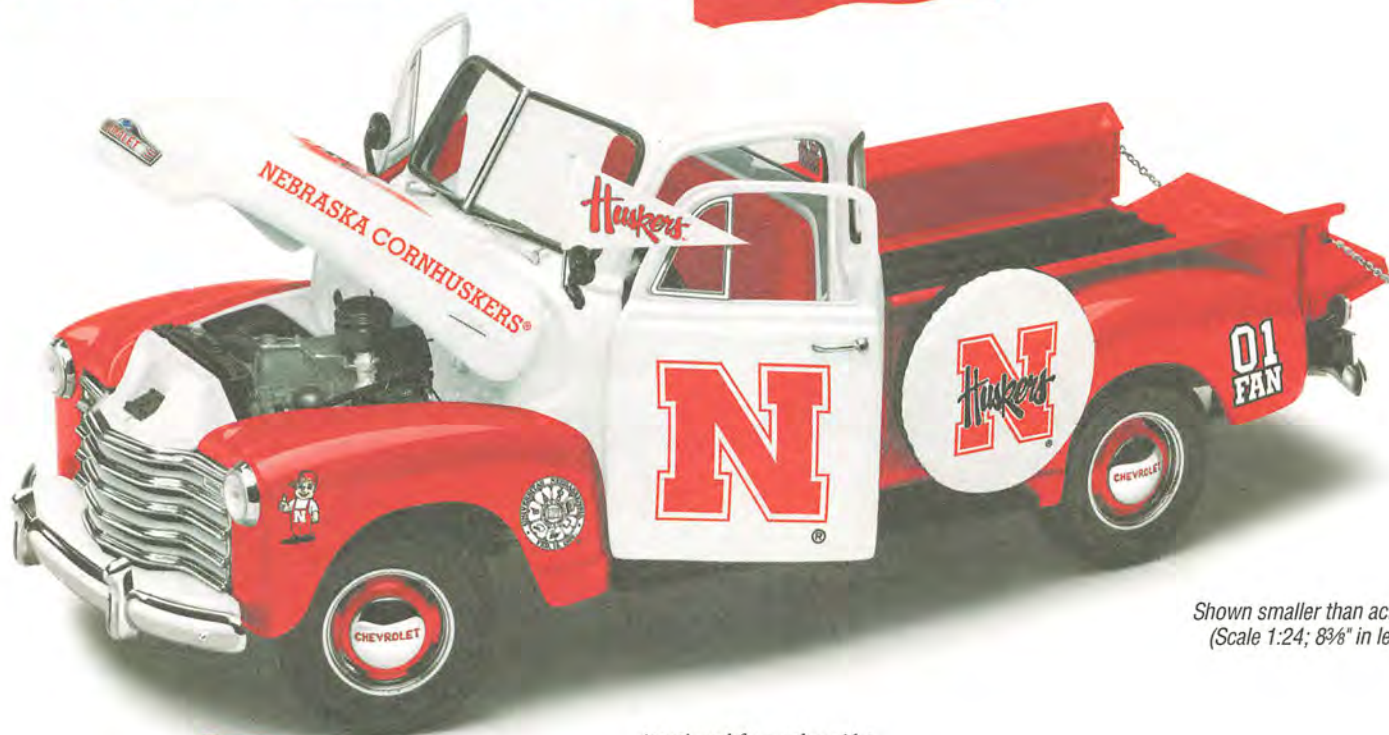
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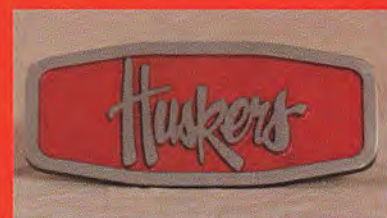
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